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OF

AN EX-CAPUCHIN;

OR,

Scenes of Modern Monastic Life.

BY

GIROLAMO VOLPE,

A CONVERTED PRIEST.

LONDON:
PARTRIDGE & OAKEY, PATERNOSTER ROW.
1853.

TO THE

REV. WILLIAM CARUS WILSON, M.A.

Revd. Sir,

It rarely happens in this world that men are induced to give the hand of friendship to one who is solitary and in exile; much more rarely that any one comes forward, in a christian spirit, to proffer him countenance and help. Yet such, sir, has been the kindness you have manifested towards me. While no circumstance would ever induce me to sacrifice my self-respect to any mere material advantage, I think it an honour to be permitted to acknowledge the courtesy I have received from you. And you will, I trust, suffer me to do so, as reflecting honour on me rather than on you, whose life has been passed amid works of untiring and christian benevolence. It is for this reason, and influenced by these feelings, which are shared with me by my dear friend Crespi, that I dedicate this work to you. I hope it will not be thought an exaggeration if I say that circumstances appear to me to afford proof that it is in accordance with God's will that this work should be published. For when, after all our exertions, (my own and

Sig. Crespi's, combined) we seemed on the point of being compelled to relinquish the enterprise, you offered me, though a stranger in England, and comparatively unknown to you, your christian sympathy; and, manifesting an interest in my undertaking, you exerted yourself so powerfully in my behalf, as to enable me to follow it out, and to carry it to completion. I have great satisfaction, therefore, in adorning my work with your name, which is, of itself, enough to recommend to the public both the author and his book.

Perhaps I may be going beyond your wishes in publishing this letter, instead of a mere simple dedication, for which I had your kind permission; but in the present instance allow me to commit myself to the judgment of the public, to decide whether a method, which your own reserve would perhaps have prohibited, be not the simplest and most effective way of manifesting my gratitude for your kindness.

I have the honour to be,
Reverend Sir,
Your obedient servant,
G. VOLPE.

Canterbury,
15th Sept., 1853.

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ERRATA.

Page 95, line 5, for the "two" natural, read, the "too" natural.
„ 106, „ 10, „ "symtoms," read, "symptoms."
„ 169, „ 20, „ "habilament," read, "habiliment."
„ 204, „ 26, „ "I killed her when abandoning her; I saw her," read, "I killed her when, abandoning her, I saw her."
„ 224, „ 19, „ "pecularity," read, "peculiarity."
„ 235, „ 5, „ "greatest" zest, read, "greater" zest.
„ 241, „ 6, „ "election of the provincial of A—," read, "election of a provincial in the convent of U—."
„ 260, „ 6, „ on the throne "elected" on the basis, read, on the throne "erected" on the basis.
„ 366, „ 29, „ for "ardonr," read, "ardour."

My Dear Friend,

I have been so deeply interested by your narration of many facts connected with your extraordinary life, as a friar, among friars, that I have been unable to resist the temptation of committing them to paper. It appears to me that these facts are eminently calculated to interest the public, and that the publication of them must be conducive to the advancement of truth. I am, therefore, induced to request you to continue the narrative, which I should be happy to publish, in the form of memoirs of your life, connected with the Capuchins and their institutions. I propose, in my narration, to adhere scrupulously to the facts with which you may favour me, only endeavouring to impart to them the colouring, and invest them with the artifices of style, requisite to render them attractive to the general reader.

Begging you to give my proposition your serious attention, and oblige me with a reply, at your earliest convenience,

I am, with every sentiment of esteem,

Your very affectionate friend,

GIROLAMO VOLPE.

My Dear Friend,

Accept my thanks for your welcome letter, containing a proposition which cannot fail of being agree-

able to me. I have frequently been advised, by persons distinguished both by piety and social position, to undertake the work which you have already, in part, executed. My reason for abstaining hitherto from publishing the events of my monastic life has been that I feared my narrative, if written by myself, would lose the desirable characteristics of impartiality and unbiassed judgment. Your offer completely removes my scruples, and I not only most willingly grant the permission you ask, but thank you very sincerely for undertaking the task. Under the blessing of God, it will, I hope, be the means of opening the eyes of many Catholics to the errors of their religion, and inducing them to embrace the pure doctrine of the gospel, as well as undeceiving others who may be on the point of embracing these errors. I give you the entire narrative, with the most scrupulous fidelity, leaving the rest in your hands.

Praying God, who knows the purity of our intentions, to sanctify our undertaking to the spiritual advantage of many,

I am, my dear friend,

Yours very affectionately,

VINCENZO CRESPI.

PART FIRST.

THE TORMENTORS AND THE VICTIMS.

VOCATION.

I WAS born at C——, a market town in one of the northern states of Italy. My family, though possessed but of limited means, bore an irreproachable character. My parents had lost six children by death, and I was their only surviving hope, their sole solace and delight. The affections of my poor mother, especially, were centred entirely upon me. Her love for all her children had been excessive, but upon me, her only remaining treasure, she lavished the tenderest regard and most anxious maternal care. She was a pious woman, warmly attached to her religion, and consequently scrupulous in the observance of the duties it enjoined. Her veneration for its appointed ministers knew no bounds. I was educated by her under the superintendence of the priests, and was guided by their counsel,

ever receiving her instructions, and those of my preceptors, with implicit and unlimited confidence. No child could be more devout at church, more scrupulous in repeating the prayers, or better disposed to lead an exemplary life. I was, however, the subject of one propensity, which sometimes led me into difficulties, and rendered me amenable to censure. Carried away by a love of play, I could not always resist the temptation of joining my comrades in a game at billiards or ball, and this, occasionally, even on feast days.

Somewhat reprehensible though this might be, it did not, however, prevent me from observing the festivals. During the time of worship I was in church, maintaining a composed demeanour; but, service over, I returned to my play. Surely this will not be regarded as a crime in one so young, considering the habits of Italy, where holy days are not kept with the scrupulous observance of Protestant countries. On Sunday the most noisy recreations are resorted to: all the theatres are open, and public pastimes are enjoyed more freely than during the week.

I was at that time so strongly impressed with religious principles, that I felt the stings of conscience for this irregularity in my conduct, and I doubt not that, left to myself, I should soon

have overcome this failing: my love for my mother and my naturally good disposition would, before long, have obtained the victory. I was now fourteen, and was already sufficiently advanced in my studies to excite some hopes of future distinction. At this time a Capuchin friar came to preach in our town. His intellectual capacity was not great; nor was he remarkable for eloquence; but he was somewhat advanced in years, and his long white beard and hoary head, his monkish appearance and his enthusiasm, all contributed to secure him many hearers and a large party of adherents. His aspect, which would otherwise have been common-place, was rendered venerable by his garb, and still more so by the impress it bore of self-inflicted chastisement, the appearance of which, even when not really endured, a friar well knows how to assume to advantage. I believed him a saint, and as such he was esteemed by others; a fatal illusion which, in my case, was the commencement of a series of misfortunes which will terminate only with my life.

Lent was nearly over and the time for Easter confession had arrived. The Capuchin, in his double capacity of preacher and friar, was incessantly occupied in hearing confessions. An immense crowd of men and women, girls and youths, thronged around him; and I, thinking

it would be a most meritorious act to confess to so holy a man, found myself one morning among this concourse of penitents. If a contrite heart, a sincere resolution to mend my ways, and a simple faith in the dogmas which I had been taught, could have rendered this performance, in itself so erroneous, pleasing in the sight of Him who searcheth the heart, my act of devotion must have been accepted of the Almighty.

The confessional is generally appropriated to women; the men confessing in a place apart. On this occasion a group of young men were gathered round the friar, behind the high altar. When my turn came, I approached him and commenced my confession, humbly exposing my errors, which, I now feel, ought to have been looked upon only as the venial failings of youth. But alas! the friar was far from taking so indulgent a view of them. With him it was a crime of deepest dye that I was guilty of playing on festival days, though, it should be understood, that my game was for amusement only and not for money. He considered this crime irremissible, and in the most terrible manner he thundered forth anathemas upon me, which rang in the ears of the bystanders, like the prophetic sentence of the angel of justice. "You are lost for ever! Go and spend your Easter in perdition," exclaimed the angry Capuchin, as he

drove me from his presence. The revulsion of my feelings is indescribable. I felt plunged into a bottomless abyss. Had the vault overhead given way and crushed me in its fall, or had the earth opened at my feet and buried me in its yawning chasm, I could not have felt more completely annihilated than at these terrific words. For a moment my excited imagination experienced the torments of the condemned, and I thought that I was dying; but, summoning all my resolution, I collected my thoughts and withdrew from the fatal place where my eternal perdition had been pronounced, a prey to the most extreme despair. What a moment was this! To escape from the crowd I had to pass by those who had heard the cry of the monster—my sentence of condemnation! I saw every eye fixed upon me; I felt in my inmost soul that I was the object of contempt to all. In every countenance I saw the expression of disdain; and staggering forward, a prey to inexpressible anguish, I quitted the fatal spot. This feeling of shame, though possibly exaggerated, was not without adequate cause, for I doubted not, that every one of the bystanders believed me to have committed some atrocious crime, to occasion that loud and solemn cry of execration, uttered by the friar, in the hearing of all who surrounded me.

At length I reached my home and entered the house stealthily, in order to avoid my dear, kind mother, who was accustomed to watch for my return, but who, on this occasion, was expecting me with unwonted eagerness, anticipating that I should appear before her in spotless purity, like an angel of heaven, cleansed from all earthly pollution, and united to God in the sacrament of the holy supper. I contrived however to evade her vigilance, and gained my room unobserved. There I could give way to my feelings, and I experienced a sort of melancholy satisfaction in surrendering myself to my agonising thoughts. I was fearfully agitated. I threw myself on my bed, stifling, beneath its covering, my convulsive sobs. My heart seemed breaking with discouragement and desolation. I felt that I was abandoned of God and man. God had cast me off; men turned from me as from a thing accursed. The image of my mother rose before my mind; but it brought me no solace, it served but to increase my anguish. In any ordinary trouble I should have flown to her without hesitation, and, pillowing my head upon her breast, should there have poured out all my grief, and there have found sympathy and relief. But now I knew that I should but awaken in her the agonies that I was myself enduring, without obtaining the slightest allevi-

ation of my own torments; for the consciousness of her suffering on my account would have added intensity, if possible, to my pain; and her love, unbounded as I knew it to be, could avail nothing to rescue one already consigned to perdition.

Horrible legends crowded upon my mind, of demons carrying off sinners alive to hell; infernal bands of unclean spirits taking possession, in this world, of souls given up to them for ever, and, anticipating death, hurling them into the dreadful abyss, amidst unearthly howls and groans. Horrid visions rushed across my mind, of sinners pierced through the body, surrounded by flames of fire, carried off to the place of eternal torment. But it were vain to attempt a description of the horrible images which forced themselves upon my brain, acting upon an imagination inflamed by monkish teachings and the assiduous perusal of superstitious writings. These atrocious productions had already unsettled my imagination, and their terrible contents now rose before my mind with appalling intensity. After an hour passed in this state of delirious torment, I endeavoured to regain my composure. I thought of my mother, who all this time was expecting me, and I determined to go to her, lest she should surprise me in my room. Powerfully repressing my feelings, and assuming as quiet a demeanour as possible, I entered her

apartment, when, as I anticipated, she fondly sought a caress. "To-day," she exclaimed, joyfully, "you have been purified and cleansed; you have received Jesus, our beloved Saviour, into your bosom; you have taken the sacrament, have you not, my dear child?" "No, mother," I replied, in a low tone, feeling as if a two-edged sword were piercing my very soul. "No! and why not? What is the matter? How excited you look!"

"I do not feel quite well."

"Not well? but how do you feel? tell me! Come to your mother;" and my dear mother wept, as the repeated losses she had sustained rushed to her mind, and she trembled for her fondly-cherished treasure.

"It is nothing, dear mother," I replied, trying to appear calm; "but I feel a weight here; a sort of oppression near my heart. Oh, God! Oh, God! give me strength;" I exclaimed, bursting into a flood of tears.

"Oh, Holy Virgin! what is going to happen? Come to me, my love, and lay your head on my bosom." And my mother besought me to tell her everything. I was on the point of confessing all, when the thought of her sorrow arrested me, and I merely said that the friar was so strict that he would not allow me to attend the Holy Communion.

"Oh, God! grant that he may not have good reason for refusing!" exclaimed she, with a look of the most intense anxiety. My conscience was troubled by her words; a voice rose from the depths of my soul, agitating it terrifically, and sounding in my ears, "Oh, yes; indeed he has good reason for refusing. His sentence is irrevocable; You are lost for ever!" During this inward struggle, I was more fully convinced of the anguish I should cause my mother by revealing my secret, I therefore assured her, with a melancholy smile, that she had no cause for alarm, and I then tried to speak of indifferent matters. She, with forced cheerfulness, assisted my efforts to turn the conversation, but I saw, by her long anxious gaze, her frequent sighs and tearful eye, that she endeavoured in vain to chase harrowing doubts from her mind. I doubt not she felt persuaded my conscience was burdened with some enormous sin, seeing that absolution was denied me. I cannot describe my state during the remainder of that day. A cold shudder ran through my limbs. It seemed to me that everybody looked upon me as possessed by the evil one. I felt as if the sentence of eternal condemnation were written in characters of fire upon my forehead, legible to every eye. Oh cruel, cruel monk! with what despair had he filled my young heart, hitherto so light and

joyous. He, professing to be the minister of the God of peace, whose message is mercy, perverted his calling, and showed himself instead an arch deceiver, and, in the sacred name of the Deity, perpetrated this diabolical act of cruelty. The God of mercy he changed into a cruel, unjust, and implacable tormentor; and in these aspects he exhibited Him to me.

The day of this fatal confession was drawing to a close. I dreaded the approach of night, for, as it advanced, it seemed to envelope me more closely in terrors. I tried to prolong the evening as much as possible, and did all in my power to delay the hour for retiring. Now and then I was tempted, by my mother's anxious look, fixed long and earnestly upon me, to throw myself into her arms, and tell her everything. But no, my courage failed me. It seemed like heartless cruelty to tell her that her darling child, her fondly cherished boy, was doomed to perdition; irrecoverably lost! And to me this fate seemed irrevocable. At length I retired, after receiving her affectionate kisses, which smote on my heart like the embrace of death. Alas, what a night did it prove to me! So terrible were the imaginings of my over-wrought brain that I tremble as I recall it to my recollection. It was indeed a night of horror, desolation, and despair. It appeared to me as if the darkness which veiled

the heavens, penetrated to my soul. Sadness, restlessness, and affright were my portion through those weary hours. The tormentor had taken hold of me, to make me his sport. There I lay awake; despair my companion. Sometimes sleep visited me for a moment, but only to augment my horrors; I started up instantly in terror, praying God to keep me awake, for sleep was worse than waking! Serpents, vomiting flames from their mouths and eyes, twined themselves around me, and, enfolding me in their loathsome embrace, dragged me slowly, by a sinuous course, down into an interminable abyss. Then, again, I was seized by a troop of demons, and hurled into a bottomless gulf, where my ears were assailed by the screams and blasphemies of those "whose worm never dieth." I was cast down, down into a den of dragons, where was a confusion of angry voices, muttered imprecations, howlings, yells and hisses, while menacing spectres rose up before me, ready to compass my destruction. Oh, horror! and worse than horror! At length the welcome light of day released me from these phantasms. Scarcely had a ray appeared on the horizon, when I rose and left my room; but not even day-light could restore my equanimity. I did not eat, I did not speak, I was quite bewildered, and in one day I had become emaciated, as if I had been suffering for a month from sickness.

During three whole days I endured this mortal anguish. For three days I kept my fatal secret. In vain did my mother weep; in vain did she question me; in vain did she conjure me to confide to her the grief that was weighing me down. The fierce friar was always before me, all my terrible visions returned, and I passed from one fit of terror to another. At last, in an unguarded moment, moved by her entreaties, urged in tones more sad than ever, that I would tell her all, in an uncontrollable burst of feeling, I threw myself into her arms, and, nearly choked by passionate sobs, made a full confession to her. She wept with me; then, tenderly drying my tears and kissing me repeatedly, she drew from me every particular; how I went to confession, what the friar had said to me, that he had given me up to eternal perdition, and the state of my mind from that day. Oh! how my poor mother cried over this sad tale of her miserable son. With gentle words she tried to comfort me, and lavished upon me the most tender caresses, endeavouring to mitigate the anguish that oppressed me. But it was all in vain; the impression on my mind was too strong to yield to consolation, or even to this overflow of maternal affection. My gentle mother had not the art to heal the poisoned wound inflicted by the merciless hand of the friar. The indelible impression of eternal misery so wrought upon my mind, that already symptoms

of an aberration of intellect began to appear, a species of madness which is very common among weak and credulous persons, whose minds are overpowered by religious terrors, excited by the priests, for the attainment of their own ends. This madness is the more terrible that it brings man into fearful conflict with the powers of darkness, even in this world. This occurrence was most lamentable for me, as I had naturally a strong bias to mental disease, a temperament which rendered me the easy victim of superstition. So great was the veneration of my pious mother for the sacerdotal character, that she did not dare to blame the infamous conduct of the man who had so iniquitously poisoned the springs of my existence. She felt inclined to believe, rather, that I had concealed something from her, than to imagine for a moment that a priest could do wrong. So authoritative, to her, were the words of the Capuchin, whom she believed to be the servant of God, that, far from denouncing his proceedings, she believed that I was indeed lost, and felt as confidently as I did that there was no escape. She saw her child, the light of her eyes, her heart's delight, lost for ever; sunk beyond the possibility of aid, human or divine. To her ear the sentence of the friar sounded as solemn as if uttered by God Himself.

It was towards evening that I made this reve-

lation to my mother, but my rest was little more refreshing that night than it had been the two nights preceding. The following morning I was alone in the family apartment, still in the same state of alternate stupor and agony. The faintest ray of hope had not yet penetrated the darkness of my soul. My mother had been out about two hours, and she now returned. With unrestrained feelings of affection, I ran to meet and embrace her. But what did I behold? She was not alone! Scarcely had I advanced a few steps when I stopped, utterly disconcerted by the expression of her countenance, which seemed to check my impetuosity.

Shivering, I stood! It seemed to me that my judge had appeared, ready at that moment to consign me to the powers of darkness! I would have closed my eyes, but terror rendered my eyelids immoveable. Fear and curiosity equally possessed me, as my gaze fell upon the man who had exercised over me so powerful a spell. I beheld that ample beard, which made him appear like a being from another world; that coarse and uncouth garment, which gave him the air of a prophet; those rigid features, in the expression of which I seemed to discern the judge sent to administer divine justice upon earth. My mother was the first to speak.

"Do not be afraid, my child! all will be well.

The good father has had the kindness to come with me on purpose to console you; perhaps he will find means to restore peace to your troubled conscience."

At these words, hope faintly dawned upon me; but my disturbed soul refused to yield, at once, to its influence. There I stood, stiff, cold, almost unconscious. In my ears still resounded those fearful words, "You are lost for ever!" At length the lips of the friar were unsealed, and he spoke in a solemn tone:

"What I have told you is true, quite true." My heart grew cold within me. "Yes, it is true," repeated he once more, as if he would persuade himself of the cruel fact, and though he restrained himself from repeating the terrific words, "you are lost for ever," I felt them nevertheless.

"Yet there is one method of escape, one way of rendering this sentence nugatory, and the means are in your own power."

At these consolatory words, my tongue, which had hitherto cleaved to the roof of my mouth, powerless to articulate a syllable, became instantly loosened. With a rapidity of utterance and impetuosity of manner which fully attested my readiness to do anything to free myself from the curse under which I lay, I exclaimed, "There is a method of escape! Oh, praised be God!

I am ready to subject myself to any trial, to make any sacrifice, to perform any act, so that my sentence of condemnation be revoked."

"What I have told you is true," repeated he, once more, to give additional force to his observations, "but there is a remedy by which you may not only free yourself from the power of Satan, but may render yourself holy in the sight of God. This remedy consists in your entering the holy brotherhood, and becoming a monk."

"Oh, God be praised! and is that all? Do you promise me that if I become a monk my sin will be forgiven, and I shall be saved?"

"Yes, I promise it; and you will become holy too." This prediction did indeed irradiate my soul with joy. I could not doubt it, for this good Capuchin was a monk, and in him I beheld a saint. I exclaimed, "Oh, father! from this moment consider me a Capuchin. I swear it, and nothing shall ever alter my determination."

How inexpressible is the delight I experienced in thus escaping from the clutch of Satan, after having felt myself grasped as his prey! I was like one new born! Discipline, flagellation, renouncing the world, forsaking my own dear mother—all seemed trifling, if at this price I could secure the salvation of my soul, and revoke the dreadful sentence under which I had groaned. On hearing this decision, the face of my dear

mother grew deadly pale. Overpowered by emotion, a sudden tremour, which rendered her unable to stand, seized her, and she sunk into a chair. I knew not whether this excitement was the effect of satisfaction at my resolution, or of sorrow at the prospect of parting from me. She uttered not a word, either of assent or disapproval, and the fierce countenance of the friar assumed a sinister expression of satisfaction. After having fixed the time and place for our next meeting, when I was to confess, and commence preparations for my change of life, the friar took his departure. My mother, who had been restrained during his stay, by her veneration for him, now burst into a violent flood of tears. Long did she weep, the tears chasing each other down her pale cheeks, and desolation seemed to have taken possession of her soul. I beheld her grief unmoved. Fanaticism had already begun its work. I was even cruel enough to upbraid her. "Mother," I exclaimed, "you see your son, who was delivered over to the powers of darkness, now freed from Satan's bonds, and you weep! You ought to rejoice rather that I am again in the way of holiness. I shall pray for you, and I shall cleanse myself from my sins. Oh, mother, you ought not to weep! You know the state I have been in for the last three days, and you ought to rejoice that I have found comfort!"

"It is all quite true, my dear dear boy, but I cannot, indeed I cannot, bear the thought of being separated from you." And the unfortunate woman sobbed aloud. "To be separated from you for ever; from you, the offspring of my love, the only one remaining to me: from you who have hitherto formed the comfort, the solace of my life! I shall be alone on this earth; no son to close my weary eyes. If you leave me I shall soon die." I felt but too surely that this would be the case, though at that time she was but thirty-five. "Surely you can obtain pardon without becoming a monk. You can be holy if you will, and lead a life of penitence, to merit the forgiveness of God, without taking the Vows: nay, it would even be more meritorious to stay and comfort the desolate heart of your mother, who cannot live without you."

"What do you mean, my dearest mother? No! I cannot be saved otherwise! The friar said so most positively, and there can be no doubt about it. The holy man cannot be deceived, nor would he deceive us."

This argument was too powerful for my pious mother, nor did she attempt to refute it, but her tears ceased not to flow the whole of that day.

A year elapsed before I entered the convent—a year of great trial for my poor mother. A deceptive religion had hardened my heart. A

profound and invincible dread of torment had rendered me horribly selfish. I trembled lest I should perish, and this ever present terror made me cruel and inhuman, and utterly perverted my reason. The dread of suffering to all eternity fixed me inflexibly in my determination, and steeled my heart against my mother's grief. I was unmoved by her profound sorrow. Her entreaties that I would remain with her, that we might live the one for the other, both serving the Lord, appeared to me a temptation, a suggestion of the evil one to induce me to renounce my Vow which was unceasingly present to my mind. Sometimes I tried by gentle words and marks of affection to win her to my views; but, more frequently, I endeavoured, proudly and reproachfully, and with a hardness of heart that must have caused her mortal anguish, to convince her that it was wicked thus to oppose the eternal salvation of her son, and attempt to divert him from his purpose, through the interest of worldly motives and earthly affections. These observations were quite in accordance with her superstitions, and weeping, she would entreat me to forgive her weakness; and then she would repeat that she could not bear the separation, and that it would cause her death. At other times her maternal affections caused juster views to preponderate, and under the influence of these sentiments she

would again try to convince me that it would be more acceptable to God, that I should break my vow and devote myself to her. Again she would repent of her counsel, and throwing herself upon her knees, implore forgiveness of the Almighty, and entreat me to remain firm in spite of her weakness.

Thus, in alternations of superstitious reverence for the decree of the friar, and in a mother's anguish at the dread of seeing her son consigned to a living tomb, she passed those intervening months. On one occasion I was so deeply moved by her entreaties, that I almost abandoned the thought of entering the convent, and acceded to a plan for joining the priesthood, under circumstances which would enable me, without abandoning her, to devote my life to God. This plan, which was suggested by some of my mother's friends, was approved of by several priests, and by one, in particular, who was her brother-in-law. It seemed to me wise and expedient, and it was one adopted by many men of sanctity. I therefore decided to embrace it, wishing to restore my mother's equanimity, and at the same time to reconcile my conscience by entering the order of priesthood. I retired to rest at night, my resolution distinctly formed; but my mind, so deeply affected by the shock of that awful day of confession, had never recovered its equilibrium; nor

indeed did it escape from its enthralment until the lapse of many years, and long experience, had taught me to justly estimate the life and conduct of those men, who, calling themselves the servants of God, make His sacred name a cloak for their misdeeds.

Fearful visions again presented themselves; evil spirits once more assailed me; I again heard the weeping and wailing of the condemned, and again felt myself a prey to fiends who were hurling me to the regions of eternal torment. In short, all the horrors of the hours immediately succeeding that first dreadful shock were enacted over again. Once more I uttered my vow of becoming a Capuchin Monk, and this time my resolution was unflinchingly adhered to, and my heart was for ever sealed against all entreaties.

At the end of the year my poor mother ceased her importunities, not because her heart was resigned, but because her brother-in-law and other priests had exhorted her to submit, making it a matter of conscience, and assuring her that she acted sinfully in opposing herself to so decided a vocation, and telling her that if she had either her own spiritual welfare or that of her son at heart, she would do so no longer. She yielded, but not with a tranquil mind. The anguish of her soul was visible, though she endeavoured to confine it to her own bosom.

After this period she became completely bewildered. She did not weep, but she rarely spoke, and she never abandoned herself to her tenderness for me. She would gaze at me long and intensely, with looks of love and despair. Without uttering a word, without attempting to kiss me, she would retain my hand locked in hers. She could not eat, and she grew visibly paler and thinner. But I would not feel, I closed my eyes to these sad effects of my pertinacity. One idea had become deeply rooted in my mind, and fenced up every avenue to my heart.

The day of my departure had arrived. Were I writing a tale of fiction I might attempt to draw a picture of despair, of tears, lamentations, displays of tenderness and emotion: but feeling that nothing can equal the dreadful reality of my mother's grief, I shall confine myself to my simple narration. The immensity of her sorrow, on finding herself on the point of separation from a son, who could so cruelly abandon his mother, was discernible in the rigidity of her features. She accompanied me about a mile to meet the conveyance which was to bear me from her. During that walk she was perfectly silent: no sigh, no sound escaped her; but in her gait there was something unnatural. She walked, but not as others walk. Her whole body was stiff.

Her feet moved as by mechanism. She seemed a marble statue, upon which the power of motion was conferred. The moment of leave-taking came. No "God bless you" was uttered by her lips; no tear was shed; no kiss was given. I did not then trouble myself as to what was passing beneath that cold exterior; but now that parting is for ever present to my mind. That walking statue is still before me, and now I can comprehend the freezing up of the springs of life, manifested in that icy figure which seemed altogether to lack vitality. Would a poet describe, or a painter depict the outward semblance of internal desolation, never need he desire a subject, or a model, more suggestive than the appearance presented by my dear mother at that moment. And I? How did I feel? Unnatural boy! I was altogether unmoved by the pitiable sight.—But no! The boy was not unnatural! Unnatural was the monk who filled his mind with the idea of becoming a saint. Unnatural is the system, which, in its fanaticism, renders man's feelings so callous that he breaks nature's ties, hating and tormenting even his own parents, under the false pretence of fulfilling the law of God. Such is the religion of Rome, which unblushingly and wickedly perverts human nature, and induces man to commit, under her authority, deeds of direst abomination.

I am digressing. The object of my narrative is not to indulge harsh criticism or severe language, but simply to furnish facts and narrate events, leaving it to others to judge of them. But my soul, revolting at the recollection of the atrocities I have witnessed, and stung by remorse at my own heartless conduct, cannot always restrain the cry of indignation against the monkish system, which could thus induce a son to behave cruelly to his own mother.

The vehicle proceeded; and as I once or twice glanced back carelessly, I saw my mother standing in the middle of the road, precisely in the attitude in which I left her, but no thought crossed my brain of returning once more to embrace her.

Farewell, tender affections of life! Farewell, love, which, in the entire devotion of two hearts, contains so rich a source of enjoyment. Farewell, friendship, with thy healing balm for every sorrow. Farewell, filial affection, which, in its profound veneration for the author of our existence, ennobles every pure sentiment. Farewell, sweet illusions, which strew with flowers the path of hope, trodden by confiding youth. Farewell, attachment to home and the sweet haunts of childhood. Farewell, sacred love of country! Henceforth all these affections must be buried in my bosom, must be as dead; it is sacrilegious to entertain them; it is an offence to God to have a

heart that beats. God requires of him who will be united to Him, under the garb of a monk, the renunciation of all human ties, the eradication of all gentle affections. The friar who does not comply with this demand,—who does not, with a vigorous hand, root up all that God has planted in the human heart, is an impious rebel against his Sovereign!

PROBATION.

A long and tedious journey at length brought me to the monastery of A——, in the Pontifical States. I was introduced at once to the Superintendent of the Novices. He was wretchedly thin, and his care-worn aspect showed evident signs of penitence and mortification. His beard was long and black, descending upon his breast. His manner was grave, self-complacent, and vigorous; and his look—calm and fixed, like that of a tamer of wild beasts—inspired me with involuntary awe. He assumed an air of affability in addressing me, and my heart being easily penetrated by tones of kindness, I felt grateful for his condescension; but the impression produced upon me by this man suggested the idea of a serpent, which can both hiss and allure at the same moment.

The duty of the Superintendent of the Novices is to watch over the conduct of those placed under his charge, to instruct them in the mysteries of

the order, and to direct them in the very severe discipline of the Noviciate. Neglect of this exceedingly strict routine subjects the Novice to reproof, and even calls down upon him personal chastisement. The office of the Master of the Novices is one of no small importance. Upon him it greatly depends to keep the Monastery well filled. He must seize the right moment to punish, to excuse, condemn, commend, frighten, allure, and imbue with superstitious terror. The term of probation is a year. During this season the novice may repent and leave the convent; he may bid an eternal farewell to the monks, and, shaking the dust from off his feet at the gate, may turn his back for ever on the holy fraternity. The Superintendent must endeavour, therefore, by skilful management, to induce in the young novices that kind of religious melancholy which makes them regard the act of leaving the sacred dwelling as a sort of apostacy. In the exertion of religious discipline he must try to win their affections, so that they may become attached to one who is so zealous for their spiritual welfare. It is evident, then, that this is a post demanding considerable tact; and men of great capacity are chosen for it, who, having thus devoted their energies for a few years, obtain a right to promotion. These gradations in the brotherhood are slow and comparatively unimportant, yet

they are, nevertheless, coveted with all the ardour of worldly ambition.

The master of the novices in the convent of A——, was eminently fitted for his employment. My mind, already in so excited a state, was by him still more inflamed, and soon I became a complete fanatic. He received me, as I have already mentioned, very favourably, and the sanctity of his appearance disposed me to venerate him. He addressed me with gentle and insinuating words; congratulated me on my good fortune, in thus being allowed, through divine grace, to devote myself to God, and to pass my whole life in His holy service. He told me that to become a Capuchin was the best, the surest road to holiness; he endeavoured to infuse into my soul a horror of the dangers encountered in the world, and of the seductions that surround men there. He spoke of the few that are saved, and assured me that I had wisely provided for the salvation of my soul, adding, in conclusion, that every earthly affection must be banished from the heart; that our love should be exclusively devoted to God, the blessed Virgin, and the saints. Listening with profound attention to this harangue, I made a firm resolution never to think of my mother, and to cease to love her; as if loving my mother were a sentiment too profane to be indulged in by a Capuchin, and must, of necessity, be displeasing to God!

On the third day after my arrival I went through the ceremony of assuming the garb of a novice. This is a public act, performed in the church, amidst a great concourse of people. The ceremonial is well calculated to inspire awe. The prayers are full of vague mysterious allusions. There God appears, not as the Father of Mercy, but as arrayed in all His awful majesty, ready, by the power of His hand, to excite the fury of the elements, and, reconsigning the world to chaos, to sweep over it in a whirlwind. These prayers are recited, or half chanted, by the monks, with solemn slowness and sepulchral tone, and fill the soul of the deluded novice with fear and trembling; producing, generally, so forcible an effect upon his imagination, that he may strive in vain to overcome it during the whole of his noviciate. He is required to remove his upper garments in the church, in the presence of all spectators, who, reverentially, and without a feeling of shame, behold him standing before them thus unattired. He receives the coarse tunic from the hands of the Superintendent, and with this dress he puts on the new man!

The sensation which I experienced during the ceremony was most delightful. I felt lifted above the world, as though my soul, freed from all earthly trammels, had disunited itself from my body, and as if I were already all essence, all spirit. Visions of cherubim and seraphim, of

holy Virgins and beatified Saints, were before me, rejoicing with me, smiling sweetly upon me, and exulting over their acquisition. I felt as if I were already one of them; already a denizen of their happy sphere, and were uniting my voice with theirs in the heavenly choir.

With a mind thus impressed, it may be imagined what I must become through fasting, penance, flagellation, discipline, mortification, and the renunciation of every earthly tie. I was prepared to undergo all; and joyfully to encounter the hardest trials of the noviciate. Though my sentiments were erroneous, yet my feelings were exalted and sublime, and my purposes sincere; and, with singleness of heart, I glowed with an earnest desire to attain after true holiness and spirituality of life. I laid aside all the garments which I had been accustomed to wear, with the exception of some flannel, and my body was covered with the coarse tunic of the order. This large, heavy, rough, and uncomfortable dress, is composed of wool, which has never been properly cleansed, and always remains in a filthy state; so that the tender limbs of the youthful penitent are tormented for weeks by an indescribable irritation, as if a host of insects had taken possession of him, stinging, gnawing, and torturing him. But all this I counted as nothing. I was to be a saint! Hard, severe, cruel, bloody even as

was the discipline of the noviciate, imposed, too, with barbarous inhumanity, to me it was but the key that unlocked the gates of Paradise!

Sanguinary and severe indeed, is the discipline inflicted by these fanatical and cruel monks, on the unfortunate objects committed to their charge; nor will my readers be disposed to dispute the justice of the terms I employ, in thus designating it, when I have described some of the regulations imposed upon these victims of an inhuman system, the relic of barbarous times. The first injunction given to the novice is to keep his eyes constantly fixed upon the ground. From this rule nothing can excuse the least deviation; the slightest motion of the eyes, however involuntary, subjects the delinquent to chastisement. Were ceaseless noise and clamour to surround him; did he find himself suddenly in the centre of a throng, agitated by fright, by anger, by exultation; a sudden burst of laughter; merry voices; the groans of the dying, imploring aid; the well-remembered accents of father or mother unexpectedly saluting his ear, in dolorous or joyous cadence; nothing, nothing whatever is accepted in excuse of a breach of this regulation. In no case, on no condition, dare he lift his eyes from the ground. It is a forbidden gratification to steal one glance at the sweet light of day, so grateful to the senses. So rigorous is this law,

that it must not even be violated in that moment of ecstacy, when the soul is wrapt in adoration of its Maker. Not even when overcome by an irresistible desire to gaze for one moment at the bespangled firmament, which declareth God's handy work, must the eye be raised; an upward look subjects the culprit to a heavy penalty. How painful is the observance of this command, he only who has submitted to it, can comprehend!

As the lively colt, who all unused to the curb, and full of tricks and gambols, taken from the rich pasture and subjected to the bit, and threatened with the lash for every kick, and start, and impatient gesture, is compelled to submit to many a pull at the bridle, and many an angry threat, and finally, becoming tamed and dispirited, learns to bear his burden quietly and obediently; so it is with the poor novice, who, at the outset, possesses the natural liveliness and impetuosity of youthful spirits.

The punishment for lifting the eyes from the ground is that of the *occhiali*, or spectacles, a name bestowed upon it, doubtless, in irony, as its effects are the contrary of assisting the visual organs. This is a bandage placed over the eyes, which allows them to look only in a perpendicular direction, towards the feet. This bandage comes over the face and is worn for hours, sometimes during the whole day. Another

punishment for this transgression is to eat off the floor, and to be limited to a diet of bread and water for a day. A second infringement subjects the delinquent to "the discipline." This consists of a piece of rope about eighteen inches in length, provided at one extremity with seven cords of equal length, braided together in so compact a manner that they produce the same effect as the cat-o-nine-tails. These instruments of torture are twisted by the novices themselves; who, instigated by penitential motives, make them as firm as possible. The culprit must himself raise his tunic and deal the blows with his own hand, for a stated time, assigned by the master at his discretion.

The novice, as I have already stated, is professedly at liberty to request his dismissal and take his departure. But such is the artifice of the superintendent, and the subtlety of the monastic rules, that, notwithstanding the rigorous discipline, he has rarely the courage even to entertain the thought of leaving. He is content to suffer these mortifications from a penitential spirit: or he thinks that he is guilty, and that the chastisement is justly inflicted: or should he not be imbecile enough to reason thus, he is too much intimidated by fear of the consequences to venture upon such a step. The novices assemble for several hours every day, to listen to the

reading of books which are calculated to reconcile them to convent life. These lectures are taken from the most absurd productions of the cloister, and consist mainly of horrible stories of youths, who have quitted their convents during the time of probation, and met an evil fate in consequence of returning into the world. Some die a miserable, frequently an opprobrious death; some become robbers and murderers, and die in prison, or by the hands of the executioner. Others, again, are tormented during their whole lives by dreadful diseases: sores, cancers, ulcers, sufferings of every description. Finally, those who thus become the victims of their own evil passions, after having led a wicked and licentious life, are struck by sudden death; destroyed in the midst of their sins by a thunderbolt; or carried alive, body and soul, by evil spirits, to flames of torment!

Such is the character of the only works that are read during the noviciate, and no other study is allowed. To look into any other book or to write a line is strictly prohibited. The consequence may easily be foreseen. The credulous and superstitious youths, timorous, and deeply impressed by these tragical tales, dare not entertain the remotest idea of returning to the world, even though the monastic life be totally distasteful to them. Thus, after they have once

entered, it requires almost super-human strength to elude the grasp of the monks. Should a novice, however, in spite of all these artifices, become disgusted with the severe discipline, and resolve to leave, he has to present himself before the master to reclaim his secular dress, which is always preserved until profession has taken place. The superintendent, of course, takes advantage of this opportunity to repeat all the hackneyed phrases about holiness and a saintly life, and the dread of eternal condemnation: so that, seduced by honied words, full of unction and affection, it almost always happens, in cases of that kind, that the youth is turned from his purpose, and resolves, more firmly than ever, to keep his vow. This conquest achieved, and the master quite secure of his prey, he revenges himself upon his victim by increased rigour, and reimburses himself for the gentle words so prodigally lavished, by extorting double penances. On this point I can indeed speak experimentally. Notwithstanding all my devotion, with all my fanaticism, all my dread of eternal torment, three times did I present myself before the superintendent, and three times did I demand my clothes. These arguments were employed, they succeeded, and I stayed.

As an instance of the arbitrary manner in which the superintendent may enforce punish-

ment for this crime of raising the eyes, I will relate an occurrence which befel myself. It was the festival of Corpus Christi. Our confraternity, with the clergy of the city, joined in procession; for on that day the Holy Sacrament is carried about in procession, and it is one of the most solemn festivals of the church. The Bishop of —— was among the number present, and after the procession, he had the condescension to step into the room where the friars were assembled, to say a few precious words to them. He was much beloved by our fraternity, being a simple-minded man, of winning manners, and a good bishop. In short, he was one of the most favourable specimens of the Roman Catholic clergy. The first salutations of the chief ones among us being over, he advanced towards the spot where I stood, and, laying his hand upon my shoulder, addressed me kindly—casually, possibly, or perhaps struck by my youthful appearance and air of deep devotion, combined with a delicacy of features and softness of expression, so feminine, that I was frequently the subject of remarks, which caused the blush of shame to tinge my cheek. "My child, let me look at your eyes," said he. The timid girl, upon whose ear falls, for the first time, the passionate accents of devotion, can never experience a ruder shock to her modesty, or suffer a more intense feeling of shame

and bewilderment, than did I at this unexpected command. The bishop repeated his request, and one of the professed brothers, who stood near me, whispered into my ear: "Lift up your eyes as Monsignore requests you." These unfortunate words broke the spell. Struggling against shame and unwillingness, I, by an incredible effort, looked up. I beheld the pleasing face of the good bishop, and I saw, for one moment, though most confusedly, the friars and the surrounding objects; but I also saw the eyes of the superintendent fixed indignantly upon mine, and immediately comprehended the price which I should pay for that one glance! "Oh! what beautiful eyes!" said the bishop. "What frightful eyes!" escaped, in sharp accents, from the lips of the superintendent. On my return to the convent I was condemned to wear the *occhiali* for the rest of the day. No doubt, had I persevered in refusing to comply with the request of the bishop, I should have been punished as severely for my want of docility.

A second very stringent rule laid down for the novices is that of maintaining strict silence. To be allowed to speak but rarely, and only on serious topics, would, perhaps, be a salutary discipline, as the mind, in silence, might powerfully concentrate itself in reflection, and divine truth might become more evident to the soul by

habitual meditation. This opinion, several of the ancient philosophers held. But the silence of the novice is subject to some very strange regulations. He may never speak to a companion without first obtaining the superintendent's permission, which is not accorded except for subjects relating to conventual rules. If obliged to speak on matters of this kind, he is required to do so in a suppressed voice, assuming a humble aspect, and with one knee upon the ground; and in this manner and posture he must invariably receive the orders of his superiors.

Neither is a monk permitted, on any account, to speak to a novice. Should he, however, transgress this rule, the novice is expected to kneel down and listen in that position; but he must not answer, nor assent, nor obey. The importance of this regulation is sufficiently apparent. The monk who is acquainted with monastic life in its full reality—who sees its abuses, its vices, its hypocrisy, and its crimes—might, urged by compassion, endeavour to enlighten the deluded mind of the poor youth, and, by informing him of the true nature of convent life, dispel his illusions, and be the means of his renouncing the cloister. On this ground, therefore, is all intercourse between them prohibited.

Very severe is the chastisement inflicted upon the novices who, without adequate cause, break

this rule of silence, or who, if commanded to speak by the superiors, do not kneel down directly.

All the chastisements above enumerated are repeated with increased severity on the repetition of an offence, and, in some cases, are inflicted at the same time.

Perhaps the most cruel chastisement of all in ordinary use, is that of making the cross upon the ground with the tongue. I have seen this penance performed through the length and breadth of the refectory, a large hall capable of seating two hundred persons, at tables placed in single rows by the side of the walls. The tongue must leave a trace along the entire surface, so that the cross is clearly visible. The natural moisture of the tongue being exhausted, it is at last lacerated, and made one mass of sores. The track begins to be red with blood, but the cross must be completed. The blood flows copiously, but there is no pity, no respite; and long before the task is completed, the miserable sufferer presents an appearance calculated to rouse the indignation of every spectator, not altogether brutalized by fanaticism.

I have already described the penance of "the discipline," but the reader will allow me to relate a circumstance that occurred to myself with reference to it. In the cell of the novice is a small window, a narrow slit, about six feet from

the ground. It is strictly forbidden to open this window. Let the heat be never so suffocating, the fetour of the cell never so insupportable, it is considered a crime to allow the smallest breeze to freshen the apartment; to obtain a mouthful of God's pure air is a grave offence. It was a hot night in July. I had not yet become accustomed to the burning climate of central Italy, and I had on my heavy tunic, which I had worn only a few days, and which was still, for the reason I have before stated, an irritating garment. I was ready to faint: I felt myself almost dying. In this state of suffering it seemed not only natural, but essentially necessary to open my window a little. It was three o'clock in the morning, and I had returned but half an hour from the choir. The superintendent of the novices passed by; he looked softly in at the door, which had no bolt, and seeing the window open, the cruel man entered. I jumped down from my bed with a sudden start, and fell upon my knees, according to rule. With a severe look he asked me, "why have you opened the window?" I did not answer. "Why have you opened the window?" Still I did not reply; but after he had repeated a third time, "why have you opened the window?" the rule permitted me to reply, and with a voice, tremulous from faintness and terror, and with my head in-

clining towards my breast, in an attitude of the utmost humility, I replied, "because I felt the heat so suffocating, father." "Well, you know the rule. Apply the discipline to your shoulders until I return." I took the scourge, bared my shoulders, and began to strike. I dealt the blows fervently, for I supposed the superintendent was right, and that my error was grievous.

Unfortunately my scourge was furnished with pins, the points of which projected at the extremity of the cords. On the preceding day, without naming it to any one, urged by motives which I then deemed pious, I had myself done this holy work, in order to render the instrument of torture more painful.

An hour passed by; the pain I endured was dreadful; the blood began to flow. Two hours elapsed; the blood trickled on the floor. Three hours were gone; but no master appeared, and I, wretched creature! continued the flagellation. The thought occurred to me to take out the pins, but my conscience shrunk from it for two plausible reasons. First, I should have been obliged to suspend my scourging for two or three minutes while thus employed, and, secondly, it appeared to me ordained by Providence that I should have furnished the scourge with these pins, just the very day before I was required to

use it against myself. So I went on for more than three hours.

At length the master made his appearance. Forgetfulness had delayed his return. He had thought no more about the wretched victim who, by his orders, was chastising himself, and only remembered me when I failed to make my appearance in the choir in the morning. He entered my cell and saw me exhausted, covered with blood, but still intent upon the holy work of scourging myself. I must own that he appeared moved at the sight of the blood. "That will do" he exclaimed anxiously, and I stopped. "Why did not you come into the choir?" With all humility I waited to hear this question the third time, and then replied, "because, father, you ordered the discipline until you returned." "And how is it the scourge draws blood? I cannot understand it." He took the scourge from me, and examining it with his forefinger, touched the points of the pins. "What is this?" he exclaimed in a severe tone. "I, to do penance, put the pins in yesterday, father." Not a word of reproof did he utter: he only said roughly, "dress yourself and go into the choir." I took up my tunic, and without stopping to wash the sores on my shoulders, went into the choir. But this was not the end of it. At dinner time, when all were assembled, the superintendent called me

with a loud voice. I stood forth, prostrating myself in the midst of the refectory. Haughtily and angrily he exclaimed, "You are a hypocrite. From hypocrisy alone you have armed your scourge with pins, to acquire the merit of being a saint. We do not want hypocrites in the convent, we want real devotion. Your punishment is bread and water to-day, eaten from off the floor." And so it was. Will not the reader pity me; and does not his anger rise at this instance of injustice?

Perhaps the hardest and most trying of all the duties of the novice, is that of being obliged to rise at midnight, to appear in the choir of the church. To lads of fifteen or sixteen, it is no slight task to arouse themselves from their heavy slumbers; and with some lethargic natures it is a torture superior to all others. To the monks this severe service is, of course, less trying; but recollecting how much they suffered before they became accustomed to it, they ought to be more indulgent towards the poor novices. On the contrary, however, it would appear that they sought revenge for the hardships they had themselves endured.

Every monk and every novice must rise; the latter a quarter of an hour earlier than the former. The novices take it in turns to arouse the convent, their charge lasting a week. The

novice whose turn it is rises first. An alarm bell is fixed above his bed. At the appointed time the whole convent resounds with the penetrating and discordant noise of the signal, which almost distracts the poor creature who is in the cell. When he is awake, he has to go through all the galleries in which the cells of the monks are situated, springing a sort of rattle. The rattle consists of a small board, furnished with four pieces of iron, which, moved by the swinging of the hand, turn round, and striking furiously against each other, cause a very loud and piercing noise. At this signal the monks and novices get up. So far we have seen nothing particularly cruel: it is the rule, and must be observed. But suppose a novice is a hard sleeper; he cannot be sure of being on the alert when the alarm bell rings; he may not be aware of it at all, or if awoke, he may not be perfectly himself, and may fall asleep again. For the delay of a few minutes he is subject to the discipline; while for failing to appear at all, he is sentenced to the punishment of bread and water, taken from the floor. In case of repeated neglect, he is compelled to make the cross with his tongue, besides various other penances, regulated according to circumstances. I remember a case in point. We had in the convent a novice who was a most excellent youth. Active, devotional, exemplary in his

duties; when awake no one could officiate in the service with more zeal and sincerity of purpose; but when asleep the poor fellow was a senseless log. To call him was useless; he did not hear: to lift him from the bed was lost labour; pricking or tickling would have been equally effectual upon a stone. In his ears the alarm bell was at best the buzzing of a fly. Every day he had to do penance. Cruel, impious tyranny, thus to endeavour to violate the laws of nature! It was an insult offered to his Creator.

The difficulty may be imagined when his turn came to call the others. The superintendent was completely perplexed, and desired to invent some method of abridging his slumbers. Satan, of course, would not abandon one of his own votaries in this embarrassment. Far from it: he offered to the good master a most ingenious and characteristic suggestion. "If he will not wake," said the superintendent, "I must find some means to make him." Accordingly he contrived that, at the first stroke of the bell, a large ball of wood, half the size of a man's head, should detach itself, and fall upon the head of the luckless sleeper. The invention, it must be confessed, was worthy of the best days of the Inquisition. I will not take upon me to declare that the life of the poor novice was in danger. I should not

then have dared to believe so; for, the motive for this extraordinary expedient being pure and holy, it would have seemed to me impossible that any evil results should follow. I leave to my readers belonging to the medical profession, who are acquainted with the human frame, with its varied susceptibilities and sensibilities, to determine where lies the seat of animal life, and to decide whether or not a weighty substance, falling upon the head from a height of several feet, is liable to produce injury to the vital organs. One thing is very certain; it must have been productive of any thing but pleasurable emotions to the poor victim, to retire to rest with this novel instrument of torture suspended above his head, with the conviction that it was destined to descend upon him, with a blow which he could not elude. Clever as was the contrivance, however, it nevertheless proved a complete failure; for the blow, though breaking his slumber, stunned him so completely as to render him insensible. Thus the proposed remedy only occasioned a new evil, and drew down upon him fresh punishment.

How horrible is the monkish institution, which can so deteriorate human nature! This superintendent was, I am inclined to believe, by nature, simple-hearted and amiable; and I feel convinced that, under other circumstances, he would have

been a man of tender and compassionate feelings. He deemed that it was a meritorious work, to secure the spiritual welfare of beings destined to live to all eternity, by keeping them in the path of duty, at whatever cost. These friars call themselves christians, and perpetrate these acts in the name of Christ! The regular orders of monks are held up, in the church of Rome, as perfect models of evangelical holiness, of true and shining piety. Amongst these orders none are more esteemed than the Capuchins. They are looked up to, as worthy of the highest consideration, as offering a more perfect type of chastity and christian perfection, than any of the Catholic orders. Be it so! I will not attempt to call this in question; but if they are the best, what must the worst be? What must that gospel be, which is proposed to the faithful of Rome? Let us hope that the time is near at hand, when such tenets will cease to be regarded as the doctrines of the gospel; when Bible gentleness, meekness, and love, will spread their benign influence, to the utter discomfiture of all systems of human invention, and when the world will no longer hope to find christianity amidst the pollutions of the church of Rome!

The experiment already mentioned having failed to cure the somnolent propensities of this confirmed sleeper, the master felt it his duty to

adopt some other mode of punishment. The plan hit upon will strike the reader, probably, as more laughable than cruel, but it bears the impress of the same tyrannic system, which tortures body and soul, under pretence of making saints.

"You are determined to sleep," said the master to our old acquaintance; "but I will take care you shall not eat. '*Chi dorme non piglia pesce.*' 'He that will not work, neither shall he eat.' To-day, at dinner-time, bring your bed upon your shoulders into the refectory, and I will see about the rest." The novice, with his arms crossed over his breast and one knee upon the ground, answers, of course with an air of deep contrition, "You shall be obeyed, father."

The welcome hour of dinner has sounded. These good monks, pious as they are, hail with very different feelings, this signal from that which summons them to midnight service. If they are ready for the choir, from heavenly zeal, they are now on the alert, inspired by carnal inclination, which, alas! so long as we are in the body, will strive for the mastery over the best and most spiritually-minded of us!

The friars, seated before a table plentifully supplied with choice food and excellent wine, indemnify themselves for the hardships of monastic life: here the monks compensate themselves for their penances and mortification. They enter

the refectory, not straggling one after another, but crossing the threshold three or four at a time, and, with an appearance of contrite composure, take their places, and prepare to do ample justice to the delicacies of the convent fare. *Arce profanum vulgus!* A holy place is this same refectory! Here monastic energy manifests itself in all its vigour. This sacred spot is made available for the punishment of crimes against the convent rules. It is true the pains and penalties here inflicted are usually of the negative kind, but imposed abstinence is not felt the less acutely, that the erring one is compelled to witness the enjoyment of his comrades, while they revel in the delights of the table, furnished with tempting viands. The refectory is a place presenting the most vivid contrasts: here the reproved listens, awe-struck, to the loud and inflexibly severe accents of the reprover; nor dare he breathe a word in self-justification, however innocent: here the more fortunate monks abandon, for a time, all mental exertion, and pleasurably vary their sacred readings and pious meditations, with smoking dishes, and savory ragouts.

The soup is distributed, and all, with silent alacrity, are busily engaged in discussing it. One place is empty—the place of the sleepy novice. Perhaps he is fast asleep, and has not heard the call to the refectory! No! he makes his appear-

ance, but not with his usual light step; for he comes laden. He carries his straw bed upon his shoulder, and his bed-clothes under his arm. It is, however, no heavy burden for his robust and well-knit frame, and he soon finds himself in the midst of the assembly, which, at once, assumes the appearance of astonishment at this strange scene. The monks suspend their gastronomic operations. One has his spoon in his soup, another has raised it half way to his mouth, a third has brought it in contact with his lips. A sudden lull ensues; every hand retains its position, as if turned to stone by the wand of the enchanter.

The novices continue their meal, for, their eyes being bent downwards, the scene is lost upon them. Some among them, perhaps, endeavour to take a peep, but fear compels them to do so stealthily. The master, with magisterial severity, thunders forth: "Advance into the middle of the refectory, and there put down your bed." The novice obeys, and, kneeling down, he waits for further orders. In monkish style the master continues: "You are a hardened sinner, with whom neither reproof nor discipline is of any avail. In spite of God and man, you sleep when you ought to be awake; you sleep when you ought to pray, when you ought to officiate and fulfil the sacred duties of the choir. Now you

may sleep when you ought to eat, and thus satisfy your sinful lust of sleep." "Ave Maria, father," answers the penitent novice, and, after arranging his bed, he lies down and goes to sleep, or, more probably, pretends to do so!

Thus elapsed a considerable time. The soup had been removed, and the boiled meat had been attacked, when the master raised his voice, and addressing me, exclaimed, "Brother G——."

I was in the act of masticating a large mouthful of meat, but at once ceased operations, and, with a sudden pang at my heart, and a throbbing of my head, as if I had received a heavy blow, I rose.

"Come here," continues the master. In great trepidation, and hastily swallowing the unfortunate morsel, at the imminent risk of choking myself, I advanced into the middle of the refectory, and, kneeling down, replied, "Ave Maria, father."

"Go and ask brother F—— which is the best, to sleep or to eat."

I walked obediently to the bed, and knelt down. "Ave Maria, brother," said I.

The brother, in his sleeping posture, answered, "Ave Maria."

"The master asks which is best, to eat or to sleep?"

"I should say to eat, but I am in for

sleeping now, and I deserve it; and so I shall sleep."

The poor lad was a good sort of youth, of a happy and careless temperament, and, as far as his position of novice permitted, was disposed to be very merry. The tone in which he replied to me was most submissive; but yet there was an indescribable mixture of drollery in it, which naturally produced a corresponding impression upon me, and, though I did my utmost to conceal my laughter, it was impossible to hide it from the lynx eye of the master, or from the ear of the rest, and I instantly received a severe reprimand.

"Ah! do you dare to laugh? Well! it is really very becoming to laugh at the faults and the punishment of your companion! Is this your christian charity towards him? Is this the sorrow you feel for his faults? Brother F—— get up—come and get your dinner—and you, sir, who show such a want of charity towards one of your brethren, you may do penance for him. Lie down in the bed, in his place, and go to sleep." Brother F—— gets up, goes to the table, takes his place, and begins to eat. I lie down in the bed, with penitential air, but rejoicing that I have already made sure of the substantial soup, and half of my meat.

This ridiculous and most disgraceful scene

occasioned not a sound among the novices—they would have forfeited their dinner had they presumed to take any part in it—but it produced in the ranks of the monks laughter and merriment, though this was not the case with all of them. Among the better disposed were some wise and feeling men, and these were indignant at the farce.

But poor brother F——'s misfortunes were not yet ended. Sleep, like an insidious enemy, who enters the house unobserved, and there plots the destruction of the victim, had taken possession of the poor wretch, and vain were all efforts to dislodge the intruder. The superintendent never ceased to invent new methods by which to obtain his end, and certainly the fertility of his brain seemed inexhaustible.

One day, at the hour of assembling for dinner, the monks as usual thronged to take their places. As each passed the threshold of the refectory he seemed to meet with some impediment, which caused him to hesitate. Stretched at full length across the doorway, lay the unfortunate votary of Somnus, with his arms crossed upon his breast, and his eyes shut. The friars, in obedience to the example and command of the master, stepped upon the chest of the penitent, and passed on. The novices, in their turn, did the same, and the poor boy had to endure being thus trampled under foot by dozens of his fellow creatures, many

of whom, in sport, must tread on their heels, to make the pressure the greater. To such contumely was he subjected for no failing of his own, but simply because nature had given him a more than common share of drowsiness. Nor did he ever overcome the propensity. Nature persisted in asserting her sway, nor would she cede her right. When he had finished his noviciate, he passed to another convent, in which he held the office of Sacristan. Here it was his duty to give the signal for the choir at midnight. Frequently his old weakness overcame him, and the friars were not called; midnight passed by, and with it the hour for the service. The poor sacristan received sharp rebukes and heavy chastisements, but all to no purpose. Equally availing would it be to chastise a lame man for limping, or a blind man for not distinguishing colours.

To the friars such a sacristan was worth his weight in gold. Without any fault or negligence of their own, they could often repose through a whole night, locked in the embrace of Morpheus, and, profiting by his misfortunes, they were but little disposed to sympathize with him. He was the scape-goat on whose devoted head were visited all the shortcomings of the rest.

But, to return to our noviciate. It is midnight; the hour at which the friars and novices assemble in the choir for divine service has struck. They

arrange themselves, standing in rows, and recite matins. These prayers occupy generally about an hour and a half. The tones are deep, slow, sepulchral, and sound as if they proceeded from the tomb. The poor novices feel an almost irresistible tendency to sleep. They are not yet accustomed to this break in their night's rest, and the time, the place, the monotony of the droning voices, all tend to increase their drowsiness; though the standing position and the necessity for uniting their voices with those of the rest, help to keep them awake. But this is not all. Matins being over, the litany of the saints is repeated, kneeling. Then follows meditation, which occupies another hour. If they were now permitted to go to bed, they might in time become used to the service, hard as it is, and cease to feel it a torment, but the worst—in comparison with which the preceding duties are nothing—is to follow. During the hour for meditation the lights are extinguished, and the friars remain in the choir, in the dark. The novices are in the church, where a long form is placed for them, before which they kneel. A faint glimmer, arising from a small lamp which is kept burning before the great altar, serves to people the darkness with shadows. There is not a breath of air, not a sign of life; death seems to rule there as in his own domain. Meditation is the sole object

of the moment; the mind is required to restrict itself to spiritual considerations; to muse on eternity, death, heaven, and the destiny of the soul. In order to strengthen meditation, all must scourge their backs with the discipline. Every novice in the church, every friar in the choir, holds this instrument in his hand, ready to apply it to his own person. Some of them, in the transports of holy zeal, cause the blood to flow; others, having more love for their bodies than their souls, perform the operation with gentleness.

At last the work of discipline is over; the silence is solemn and profound. Now comes the hardest trial for the poor youths. The novices kneel before their form, but woe to them if they dare to touch it! They must kneel unsupported. If they even dare to put their hand upon it, they are guilty of a punishable offence, and chastisement inevitably follows detection. Their eyes are heavy, their eyelids droop, their heads nod, and sleep gets the mastery; but alas! for the poor youth, the master is ever on the alert; his eyes can surely see in the dark. He moves about without his slippers. It behoves them to be guarded. Should they, disregarding the voice of conscience, venture to raise their eyes, they are liable to meet the searching glance of the superintendent fixed full upon them, for he moves about noiselessly, like the spirit into whose charge the place is given, and who dwells in the

house of silence. The weariness of the limbs, the overpowering force of sleep, may beguile the wretched hand to rest for a moment on the form, for the stiffened body can no longer keep itself erect; but that hand, or that nodding head, may be observed by the master, who may at that very moment be close to the culprit. Stout of frame and of heart must be the youth who, in the middle of the night, after three hours vigil, does not, in the midst of darkness and silence, feel a tendency to sleep. The punishment for this involuntary weakness is limited to a hearty shake at the time, for not a word must be heard there; but it is followed up by a sharp rebuke in the refectory, severe chastisement, and frequently continued persecution.

The reader can scarcely form an idea of the torments of the poor novice during this hour of meditation. At this distance of time I can hardly bear to think of the suffering I endured at our terrible nocturnal vigils. I shrink from the thought, and my mind is troubled, as I recall my own experience, and the intense sufferings of my companions.

The hour of meditation having ended, three hours of rest are allowed. All rise at six, and then commence the daily exercises, which, in the precious light of the sun, may be more easily endured.

Thus I have given a history of the noviciate,

which is a life of tyrannical and cruel penitence, calculated to stupify the poor youths, who remain and become monks, because they lose the power of exercising their own will, and have not the moral courage to demand their dismissal. Thus are the novices prepared for the holy life of the monk.

ANECDOTES.

I think it will not be uninteresting to the reader to peruse, in addition, some anecdotes, which still further exemplify the miseries of the noviciate, before we pass to the consideration of graver subjects relating to the monastic life, in a more advanced state.

The novices not only make, but wash their own clothes. One day I had written out the list of articles for the wash; and this being absolutely the sole occasion on which a novice is permitted to take up a pen during his noviciate, I was, I suppose, awkward from want of practice; for I stained my fingers with ink. I could not wash my hands without asking permission of the master, and this I had not the courage to do. I did not dare to wipe my fingers on my tunic, lest the stain should show, nor on any other part of my dress for the same reason. I was much embarrassed for a moment, when, unluckily, my eye fell upon my sandals. These

were new: I had just made them for myself, and and they were still fresh and clean. With juvenile thoughtlessness, I cleaned my fingers on part of one of them, and thus dyed the binding black. At sight of the mischief, I grew frightened at what I had done, and then, to make it symmetrical, I stained the other side of the binding too, and put my sandal on again. Shortly after I met a lay brother who had been many years in the convent, a hypocritical kind of person who spoke through his nose in the most ridiculous manner. Scarcely had he seen me when his eye fell upon the stained sandal. He was scandalized, thinking that I had done it from motives of vanity, to appear smart, and he said, "Oh! my young monk! You came here full of worldly thoughts and tastes, and are still full of vanity. This is not the way to become holy, to pay so much attention to outward appearance. This dyed sandal is a piece of finery unworthy of a monk who has renounced the world. I must do my duty, and inform the superior of it." He kept his word: the master was duly informed of it; and he waited for the hour of assembling in the refectory to reprove and punish me. It was dinner time. The friars and novices were in their places. Grace was said, and the master summoned me to appear before him. Tremblingly I obeyed, and knelt

down in the middle of the refectory. He then commenced a long and angry sermon, upbraiding me for having entered his presence adorned, perfumed, ornamented as if I intended to go to a ball, to make conquests. "Is this your life of penitence, of self-denial, of renunciation of the world and its vanities? Oh! for shame, for shame! To dare to present yourself with a painted sandal to look fine! Is the convent a proper place to show off your profane finery?" And thus he went on with his lecture, which seemed to have no end, scolding me for being proud, worldly, and licentious. I might have been about the town, indulging in every scandalous excess of riot. "To-day you may content yourself with bread and water," continued he; "but first go round to all the brothers and novices, and show them your profane sandal, and ask them one by one whether they think it pretty." "Ave Maria, father." I rose, kissed his hand, and approached the nearest monk. "Ave Maria, is this sandal pretty?" at the same time holding the unfortunate cause of rebuke close under his nose. "Yes, it is pretty; but it would be better without the black." Another: "yes, it is very pretty." Another: "I do not know, but with this ornament I think not." Another: "no, it is ugly, because it is worldly." And so on. Some others, among the few wise and good, knowing

me to be innocent, were displeased with the severity of the master, and contented themselves with replying, "I do not know," in a careless manner. One amongst them, the wisest and most venerable, said, "yes, it is pretty; but it would be prettier if the other were painted too." This he said designing to give the master a hint, implying that, had it been painted for vanity, its fellow would have been painted to match. At last I came to the novices, to each of whom I had to put the same question. They were content to make the same reply that they had heard made by the friars: "yes, it is pretty; but it would be prettier without the black." The fourth novice, by a natural impulse, raised his eyes to look at the sandal as he replied. "Ah! dare you open you eyes?" thundered the master. "You dare, in my presence, in the presence of all the fathers, to look up! Do you mean to defy me, to defy the holy rule of Saint Francis? Scandalous conduct! Apply the discipline directly!" And the poor foolish lad, who had thus incautiously opened his eyes, was compelled to inflict upon himself the chastisement. But to proceed. The novices, thus warned by the example of their unfortunate companion, were not likely to fall into his error. One of them, however, was too conscientious to reply "it is pretty," without

looking at it, for to him it seemed telling an untruth; so he substituted "I do not know." "Ah, you do not know," cried the master—"what answer is that? You mean to elude the question, and not give an answer. You wicked lad! It is not your companion that asks you; it is I, by his mouth; so it is the same as if you were making game of me! Obey directly! To-day you eat from the floor." The poor novice, quite terrified, performed the penance.

At last I completed the round of the refectory and finished my imposed task; and so ended the ridiculous sentence of the sandals.

If I were writing a work of imagination, such inventions as the foregoing fact, would be poor and trivial; but, being the simple truth, they can but be considered as suggestive and significant. Our narration will asume a more important character as our novices advance to maturer age. The colouring of our picture will take a graver tint, and acquire a more elevated tone as we proceed in the development of convent life; and it will be seen that, with regard to all human passions and propensities, monks are essentially men!

To proceed with our anecdotes. A strange incident happened to brother F—, whose acquaintance we have already made, *à propos* of his sleeping propensity. This case will abund-

antly manifest how far monkish practices are removed from that gravity and decorum which the gospel enjoins upon its followers, and which its sublime truths and mysteries are calculated to produce. Deep indeed is the delusion which regards the religion of the monks as christianity, or the belief of Rome as the faith of Christ!

Each convent has its garden, which is kept in order by the friars themselves. In those convents where there are novices, the garden is of great importance, for each novice is allowed to cultivate his own plot of ground. This is his only relaxation; and, in the midst of the severe routine to which he is subjected, it is indeed a most valuable and salutary recreation. It will readily be conceived that all avail themselves of this regulation with alacrity. There is a time every day for gardening; and while this is going on one of the elder novices intones the rosary, and the others respond. My readers may not be aware that counting the rosary is the most common form of prayer in the Romish church. It consists in repeating a certain number of Ave Marias, intermixed with Paternosters and short meditations on the sufferings of the Virgin Mary. The Ave Marias are represented by beads, and the thread on which they are strung is called the crown, and is often very costly, particularly if the beads are made of precious stones.

Even this innocent recreation of working in the garden is not exempt from the danger of punishment. The plot of each novice is subject to a rigorous inspection. If weeds are suffered to appear among the flowers, if the plants are not tidy and healthy, if the ground is not even and free from stones and rubbish, reproofs and punishments are administered.

One day we were all at work in the garden. Poor brother F—— inadvertently struck his weeding-hook against a fine carnation, the stalk of which bore a beautiful flower. The stalk was broken, and the flower hung drooping, as if struck by a hail storm. The unfortunate novice took up the carnation, which was severed from the plant, and, with an air of the deepest compunction, presented himself before the master, holding the evidence of his carelessness in his hand. Kneeling down he commenced:

"Ave Maria, father."

"What do you want?" said the master, with his usual fierceness.

"I am come to accuse myself of carelessness."

"Just like you! Some stupidity or another."

"Father, as I was weeding my garden, I was awkward enough to knock against the stalk of this carnation, and break it, and here is the flower that I broke off."

In the case of any accident that may occur to

a novice, it is the rule that he must accuse himself, and it would have been considered a crime had he begun by saying, "I have had the misfortune."

"You are always doing some mischief," continued the master. "Bring your carnation with you when you come to refectory to-day." He had already settled in his own mind the punishment the poor culprit was to receive.

At the hour for assembling, after receiving the customary reproof, the novice was ordered to kneel down, with the carnation in his mouth. It was a most ludicrous sight to behold this great lad, with his arms crossed, his eyes bent down, his knees on the ground, and the flower sticking out of his mouth like a pipe; and the monks, availing themselves of their liberty, looked on and laughed. Thus passed away half the dinner hour. "Brother F——," exclaimed the master suddenly. "Ave Maria," returned the novice, with his teeth closed for fear of dropping the flower, the consequences of which would, he well knew, be serious.

"Do you like the carnation? does it taste nice?"

"I do not know, father," replied he, in a tone, the effect of which was most ridiculous in consequence of his teeth being closed, "I have not eaten it yet." This answer produced a burst of laughter from the friars, in which even the novi-

ces could not help joining, after one of their number had set the example. These were instantly punished by the indignant master, who deprived them for that day of their wine, and a portion of their meat. For having dared to answer in this ridiculous tone, brother F—— was ordered to eat the carnation forthwith. The obedient lad immediately began to cram the whole flower into his mouth, stalk and all; and, although I am inclined to suspect that the taste of a carnation is much less agreeable than its perfume, yet he munched away with an alacrity which showed that he was seriously bent upon devouring it all. Alas! for his poor stomach, had he been permitted to carry matters to that extremity; but the master, perceiving that the flower was well masticated, ordered him to spit it out, and wash his mouth, which must indeed have required ablution, after the delicious morsel. He was then admitted to the table, where he took his seat most joyfully.

Neither friar nor novice can be expected to possess a very exalted idea of christianity when it is thus presented to them in the convent.

The manner in which the novices hold their heads, and fix their eyes upon the ground, is a matter of no small importance to them. If they close their eyes too much, they are reproved as hypocritical; if not sufficiently, as proud. They

are frequently subjected to undeserved reproach in order to try their humility. Sometimes a novice is summoned, quite unexpectedly, without his being conscious of having done wrong, of having committed the slightest fault. Trembling he appears, not being able to guess of what he is about to be accused, his heart beating the faster the less he can imagine his crime. Perhaps he is accused of having raised his eyes, or of having spoken, or of having leaned upon the form during the hour of meditation. But not a word must he utter in reply, or excuse, even if perfectly innocent.

After having thus described some of the severities of convent life, its trivialities—so utterly inconsistent with its professed aims—its fanaticism, predominating especially in the rules of the noviciate—and the arbitrary and cruel administration of those rules, which, bad enough in themselves, are still further perverted by the master and superiors,—it will not, I think, be out of place, if I here draw some inferences, of the correctness of which, the intelligent reader will be able to judge, after perusing the statements which I propose to make in the sequel of my journal.

It will, I trust, be fully believed that I am influenced by no sentiment of anger or revenge, but by a feeling of christian justice, a hearty desire to open the eyes of every one to the absurd,

inconsistent, hypocritical, and cruel system of a religious order, which, by assuming an appearance of humility, sanctity, and poverty, has succeeded in obtaining great consideration in Italy, in all other Roman Catholic states, and, I may add, even among Protestants. It is in homage to the highest interests of civil and religious truth that I have been induced to withdraw the veil from those fearful facts, which manifest the falseness of the system of the Capuchins, based as it is upon perverted principles; principles, which, involving the most abject falsehood, are totally unworthy of a christian priesthood. These revelations will, I trust, serve to awaken many Catholics, and to induce in Protestants greater watchfulness, so as to prevent them from being misled by a false pretence of sanctity; a pretence, which, when skilfully supported by outward show, exercises so powerful a sway over the imagination, as to induce weak minds to embrace and follow a hollow and delusive religion.

The early age of fifteen is that appointed for entering the convent and commencing the noviciate.

At that period of life the youth knows nothing of the world. The passions which develope themselves so powerfully in more advanced age are still dormant, and he is peculiarly susceptible of this vocation, which is but too frequently the

effect of a morbid fancy, resulting from the superstition, scrupulosity, and fanaticism, which characterize the system adopted in his early education. The tendency to conventual life manifests itself but rarely, at that age, under other influences than those described. It is a rare case for a youth to enter a convent, who does not belong to a bigoted family, or who is not of a sickly turn of mind; and thus predisposed by fanatical and erroneous ideas to become a monk. This peculiar disposition is assiduously cultivated, and excited to delirious enthusiasm, by the routine of the noviciate. The novices are taught to regard the discipline as a wonderful combination of abstinence, self-denial, privation, and penance, which serves to purify the soul from all earthly dross. The primary virtues inculcated are humility and implicit obedience. In general every species of chastisement is received with a penitential spirit; be it never so cruel, never so unjust, the sentiment of humility forbids a murmur, or the slightest feeling of disgust; and the youths submit joyfully to such trials that they may be more worthy to belong to the holy family of the Capuchins. Conscience, watched over with the utmost degree of slavish rigour, would reproach them if they dared to express or even to harbour a feeling of discontent. Should such a feeling, by a rare exception, take possession of

one of them, and induce him to think of quitting the convent, his fears are worked upon, until, dreading the effects of the contemplated apostacy, the victim is seduced into renewed vows of bondage, and remains for ever chained to the convent.

During probation, the novices have no reason whatever to think the monks anything but saints, nor do they even suspect their vices. Never allowed to raise their eyes, they are prevented from reading in their countenances the expression, so different from holiness, which in many of them is sufficiently visible. Not being permitted to converse, the novice avoids hearing the unholy, malicious, and evil words which but too frequently escape the lips of the friars; and thus it never occurs to him to doubt that their lives are holy and blameless. He is not present at their social gatherings, where murmuring words and licentiousness abound; nor does he ever associate with them except for the performance of religious ceremonies. Thus he holds them to be so many models of sanctity, and ardently desires, in the purity of his mind and fixedness of his faith, even though it may be through trial and mortification, to belong to the elect number of these saints. Fatal illusion! A day comes when these men appear to his unsealed eyes in all their reality, without mask, without illusion. Too late he recognizes his error and repents of it.

Under the severe discipline of the noviciate, the novices beguile themselves with the thought that, the time of trial once past, their life will be entirely exempted from its former rigour, and that, devoting themselves to works of piety and love, they shall enjoy uninterrupted blessedness and felicity. Far from sighing for worldly pleasures, the utmost object of their ambition is the termination of the trials of the noviciate. After this, they believe that their path will be strewed with flowers and unalloyed spiritual enjoyments. It is natural to sanguine youths to believe that enjoyment and pleasure must follow so large an amount of suffering and sacrifice; and the very rigour with which they are treated, during the time of probation, favours the thought that their future lot will be not only bearable, but enjoyable, invested with the freedom of maturer life, and severed from the hardships of the noviciate. It must be considered both impious and wicked, thus to entrap unsuspecting youths in a snare from which they cannot afterwards free themselves. Inexperienced and defenceless, they are led on to pronounce the solemn vows, without the opportunity being allowed them to think of the consequences.

Deluded, blinded, seduced as they are, scarcely is the noviciate over, when they are led like victims to the altar, decked out with flowers, their

eyes blindfolded, a garland on their devoted heads, and accompanied by bands of music and festive song. Here the blood is shed; the victim is offered, immolated on the shrine of the god of selfishness and hypocrisy; itself, the while, wholly unconscious of its fate. Yes, at the end of the probation, in the joy of their hearts, exulting in the prospect, and ignorant of the real nature of the persons and things which surround them, they make their profession, and their fate is sealed in the book of destiny. Utterly unconscious of the importance of the step they are taking, they pronounce the vows of chastity, poverty, obedience! These vows are taken ere the novice has attained physical maturity; ere the soul has been roused by the storm of passion; before the blood, heated by exuberant imagination, courses through the veins with consuming force; before he has learned to covet the riches of this world; and before ambition, that fatal tyrant, which rages like a fury in the human breast, has exerted any influence over him. But when the physical frame has attained to maturity, when the mental powers are ripened, and the passions fully developed, then the vow assumes a totally different aspect. Whether its influence is sufficiently great to subvert the laws of nature, we shall see as we proceed with our narration.

The year of my noviciate had expired. Without loss of time, without reflection, just as I was, almost stupified by the severe discipline, and full of religious enthusiasm, without thinking of my mother and other dear friends, or of things which might one day excite my desire, I proceeded joyfully to pronounce the vows. I should be no longer a novice. The trial which I had undergone during the year of the noviciate, so arduous and trying, was now accomplished, and that triumphantly. My resolution to become a saint was strengthened. I was now to experience the delight of monastic life, with all its spiritual privileges; I should no longer have to tremble before a severe and cruel master. For the future I should be reproved for real faults only, which would occur but seldom, and my chastisements would be deserved; so that I should cease to be in constant dread of ignorance and arbitrary punishment. My eyes might sometimes be raised from the ground; for though the rule would still be in force for four years to come, yet I should be no longer watched, and an unguarded look would not, as heretofore, expose me to punishment. All this was a great matter. The dread of allowing my own voice to be heard, or of listening to the voice of others, would be over; my lips, no longer

close sealed, would permit the egress of my words; the rule for remaining in the church on my knees for an hour after matins would not be so rigorously enforced, nor the prohibition so strict against supporting myself a little with the form! What a delightful life! The entire discipline would be greatly modified, and a new era would commence for me. Thus did I reason; but little does the victim know at what price this remission of discipline is purchased: little does he think what he gives up; what great good he thus solemnly renounces; what heavy burden he takes upon his shoulders! While exulting in the thought of no longer trembling before a furious master, and flattering himself that he can be good and religious, and become holy without difficulty, he closes his eyes to the infallible effects of his unnatural votive offering, and forgets or ignores the fact, that nature herself may prove a tyrant far more inflexible than the sternest superintendent!

The importance of the vows, thus assumed by a youth of tender age, is not to be over-rated. He thinks that he is performing a holy and blessed work, that cannot fail to open for him the gates of life, while in truth this step is calculated to impel him with resistless force along the road to death. Oh, youthful votary, look well, think well, examine deliberately your own

inclinations, ere you pronounce the vows! Come and let us reason together, poor deluded one; let us escape from the searching glance of the master, and hold converse on the matter. You have yet had no experience of that blissful feeling, which is the life, strength, and principle of the universe, and by which all things exist and fulfil the laws of their great Creator, fertilizing and welling forth springs of happiness to man. Love it is, which, hallowed by the pure precepts of the Bible, adds a charm to all the innocent delights of life, and soothes its direst woes! That companionship, God, in Paradise, provided as a help meet for man! You know nothing of this yet; but can you be sure you never will? Do you imagine yourself a privileged being, who, though confined to the earth, will breathe a purer atmosphere; whose feet, in their rapid and ariel motion, will scarcely touch the glittering surface; but will pass onwards—onwards over this material globe, ever approaching a spiritual world? Far more likely that you will become a man like other men, with the same inclinations, the same passions, and the same frailties: that you too will experience a void in your heart, an irresistible yearning to love, though such yearning be for you sacrilege and impiety, pledged as you are.

In this struggle, the passions become imperious,

you writhe under your chains, making almost super-human efforts to free yourself from your deadly anguish. Your bonds press the closer. Your whole being—the entire man—is in a state of wild excitement: opposition stimulates imagination: alternating between duty and inclination, your mind loses the power of distinguishing between right and wrong. Woe to you if you fall! Too well, then, will you recognize the importance of your vow!

But grant that superstition rivets its iron chain, and human feelings are subdued, the monk goes forth among his fellow men an austere maniac, the enemy of those whose blessings he may not share. He is a ravenous wolf to whom food has been denied. He watches the sheep and lambs which the good Shepherd caresses and carries in His bosom: he introduces himself among them in their own garb of harmlessness and innocence, and when once in the flock, he seizes them with his venomous fangs, and, tearing them to pieces, devours them with ravenous appetite!

And the vow of poverty? If the desire of riches should make itself felt, all the more for the privations to which you are subjected; if you experience an insatiable covetousness of worldly possessions, either for yourself or your brotherhood; while struggling to subdue this longing, as a passion of the earth earthy, you will by that

time have learned—though now you close your eyes and your ears to the fact—that you do but share this tendency to avarice in common with your brother monks, who are indefatigable in the pursuit of riches for their convents, like the usurer who profits by other people's losses to enrich himself and his family.

Ambition again will surely take possession of your heart, and present itself in a thousand different shapes. It is ambition, when, with your head drooping, your hands crossed upon your breast, you make a show of humility. Ambition is the prompter when you fast before your brethren, and, in order to exalt your name and obtain a reputation for sanctity, content yourself with a handful of beans, while your companions partake of a sumptuous dinner. The man who has taken these vows has sealed his own perdition, unless a miracle of divine grace be performed in his favour. Think, novice, think, ere you take so fatal a step!

If it were possible thus to reason with the poor novice, few would be induced to profess, and how many crimes would be spared! But never do they hear a warning voice. Blinded and deceived by fanatics, they pronounce the vows.

After profession, I left the convent of the noviciate, and was sent to another in the same province. I entered my new convent with a pure

heart, disposed to pursue my career with scrupulous exactitude, and perform the duties of a friar conscientiously. This I did as far as was compatible with the relaxation of my enthusiasm, which ensued as my eyes begun to be opened, and I beheld things as they really were. If I was not a zealous friar, after knowing the friars well, neither was I a vicious one, and no reproach can be cast on that part of my life. Now that I am undeceived, and am no longer either a friar or a Roman Catholic, but, thanks be to God, a christian, it is a satisfaction to me to reflect, and to declare before God and man, that, however much my zeal might relax, I never brought dishonour on the garb I had assumed, but always endeavoured to act conscientiously. I make my name known to the public as a guarantee for the truth of these revelations, which can be attested by many persons who, like myself, have abandoned the frock to embrace a course of life more in conformity with the precepts of the gospel.

My zeal was at this time ardent, and it was my desire to maintain it so. I was presented to the friars, of whom there were about fifteen, and I regarded them with awe and veneration. I looked forward to enjoying among them a tranquil blessed life of spiritual consolation. I led, at first, a very solitary existence, and mixed very little with the rest; I had no familiar intercourse

with them; and if by chance I found myself in the midst of several of them, their conversation appeared to me most edifying, for they had the grace to respect the innocence and inexperience of a youth just out of his noviciate. I saw nothing that was reprehensible, nor did I hear anything objectionable. This state of mental and physical tranquillity I enjoyed for three weeks, nor suspected the occurrences of which I should shortly become the witness. In the convent were three other youths, who had been novices with me; I held, however, little intercourse with them, and nothing passed between us to undeceive me with regard to my new life. I believed them to be perfectly contented, and to be in a condition of mind similar to my own. One morning, as I was returning to my cell, after the service of the choir, I heard loud and angry voices, as of two persons quarrelling. I raised my eyes, which I could now do without fear, and what was my surprise to see the countenances of two friars inflamed with rage against each other. My agitation was excessive on hearing the words of anger and invective which they were addressing to each other! I was so struck with this novel and unexpected sight that I could not proceed, and stood fascinated, with my eyes fixed upon the terrible scene. I recognized the countenances of the two; one was the Vicar, or Viceguardian;

and both faces presented an appearance of incredible fury; their eyes were fixed, with a flaming glance, that showed how each would gladly annihilate his adversary. The most furious and provoking language was uttered by them, with shameful reproaches and retorts, and they made use of the most obscene words, which are rarely heard except among the very lowest classes in a street riot. It was a fearful sight, to see these two men, whose aspect was ordinarily so venerable, in this position; indeed it was a picture worthy of Satan, presented by those who professed humility, love, and meekness, and whose garb was the emblem of christian gentleness. This spectacle had such an effect upon me, that I remained standing there as if rooted to the spot. I was spell-bound, like the innocent bird, which finds itself irresistibly attracted by the gaze of the serpent, and is powerless to resist the charm. I felt in my heart the anguish of death. It seemed to me as if this holy place were desecrated, contaminated; as if a fiend were exhaling within it the very fumes of the bottomless pit. My feeling of horror was natural. Simple and inexperienced as I then was, and entertaining the profoundest conviction of the holiness of the monks, I had not as yet the most remote idea of the vices so prevalent in convents. These two friars were so blinded by fury that they did not even relax when they saw that they were

watched. They cared not that the pure eye of youth was scandalized by their conduct. Their rage and indignation rose to such a pitch, that their fingers contracted convulsively, as if burning coals were in the palms of their hands. With these consecrated hands each now attacks his adversary. They fight, they grasp hold of each other; with hair dishevelled, they foam at the mouth, and their impious words give place to savage yells of rage. I saw no more distinctly; the two friars seemed to be metamorphosed into two demons, the more hateful that they had assumed the garb of the seraphic Saint Francis. The whole convent was in confusion at the noise and screams of these maniacs and the cries of those who rushed to ascertain the cause of the tumult. Some of the friars, throwing themselves between the combatants, succeeded in parting the enraged monks, who, while they were dragged away in opposite directions, ground their teeth, and cast upon each other looks of intensest hatred. My companions and myself were ordered to retire. I withdrew to my cell in a state of indescribable agitation, and when I was alone I wept. The event had so excited me, that for several days I could enjoy no peace: my mind was quite disturbed by the horrid occurrence. This was my first glance into the character of the monks.

The criminals received no other punishment

than temporary excommunication, for having fought, *suadente diabulo*, they could not say mass until they had obtained remission from the provincial. Perhaps they might receive severe reproof, but I was not aware of it.

The excommunication was withdrawn; they resumed the exercise of their holy office, and held friendly intercourse as heretofore with their brethren. The affair was forgotten; but my imagination had received an impression which never more could be effaced. A suspicion entered my mind which I was unable to overcome, though I almost looked upon it as a temptation of Satan. It then began to glimmer upon me that the monks were not the saintly men that I had believed them to be; but yet I still thought that the bad ones were few in number, and were the exception. The idea then also came into my mind, which before I should have considered absurd, that it was possible to be a monk without being a saint, and that a monk was in reality only human. This was certainly one great step towards disenchanting me with the course of life which I had embraced so readily, and with such full purpose of heart. It was not, as yet, any determined aversion that I felt; indeed I scarcely acknowledged the change to myself, but, unknown to me, the seeds of it were already sown, and were germinating in my mind.

Not many days elapsed before I had occasion again to be shocked at the conduct of another friar. The winter was over, but there was still a degree of coolness in the air, particularly in the morning, which induced the friars, after the choir service was over, to stop for a little while in a common room, where a good fire was burning; and, conversing together and enjoying the warmth, they stood grouped around it, like a body of pious worshippers of that element. This practice they continued as long as possible, even when the hot weather had commenced, for the fire served as a pretext to pass away a little time in pleasant confab. We younger ones, who now, after profession, were considered as destined irrevocably to the monastic life, began to assume the habits of the brotherhood, and liked to associate with the older ones. One morning we were all assembled as usual; I was beginning to overcome my bashfulness; the monks were chatting together, and we were listening silently. Their conversation was not wholly innocent, but was tinged occasionally with impurity: there was considerable murmuring, and they uttered a great deal of slander. One of them took the lead, and some assented, whilst others expressed disapprobation; for I must again repeat that among the friars are some who are good and conscientious. The champion in the holy cause of slander tore to

pieces, without mercy, the fair fame of his fellow-creatures, both in the convent and out. He was one of the oldest of the fathers, and was considered a good orator, and his doctrine was orthodox. His appearance was not unpleasing, and there was nothing malevolent or objectionable in his countenance, except that his eyes frequently sparkled with a satirical expression. He was about seventy, but his manner was bold and commanding. He had a strong inclination to ridicule other people's defects, and to publish the faults of his neighbours; in short, he was a haughty dangerous person. He gave full liberty to his tongue on this occasion, and his words were one continued satire. The virtues of his brethren, whether real or not, he treated as assumed; their vices, whether true or false, he represented as true. His venomous fangs spared no one. He knew everything that was going on in the town; and when he acquired a piece of information, calculated to bring discredit on some honourable citizen, or dishonour upon some respectable woman, he was quite elated at having found an object on which to exercise his malevolent tongue. According to him, Father this, with his head on one side, and his affectation of devotion, is a hypocrite, a hardened sinner, a whited sepulchre. Brother that, who eats so little in the presence of others, revenges himself by eating plenty when

he is alone. Another one makes pretensions to learning, but is in reality most ignorant. Another, who is covetous of votes, in order to be elected by the fraternity, to a post of honour, humours and secretly flatters the brethren, to seduce them, and gain them over to his side. One is too particular to go begging;* when he has bread given to him at the door he receives it with a bad grace: but some of the gentler sex receive the lucky friar most kindly, and invite him into the house to rest himself; and the good father in question receives these invitations pretty often, and takes advantage of them too; especially at one house, from a certain lady! Thus did he run on, repeating or fabricating the most uncharitable tales of the poor brethren, who were so unfortunate as to fall under the lash of his caustic satire. He spared no one: neither age nor sex, neither character nor position was safe against the vile aspersions of his tongue. I was completely shocked by his accusations against absent persons, and felt quite agitated; for I was not accustomed to such conversation. One of the listeners, a young friar already distinguished as a preacher, a frank and conscientious man, took upon himself to re-

* To go begging is to go round to all the citizens asking alms, in order to procure provisions for the maintenance of the convent.

prove severely the wicked old monk, who was so wanting in christian charity, and who charged others with misdeeds from which he himself was not exempt. But the young man was hasty, and instead of rebuking him with mildness and judgment, he pointed with his finger to the fire, and exclaimed abruptly: "Oh you wicked old scandal-monger, will you never have done slandering every body in this infamous manner, and finding fault with everything? You, with one foot in the grave, do you dare to ask for divine mercy, when you are treating your fellow creatures so unmercifully? Do you see that fire, you abominable old man? Well, it is a type of that fire, that will destroy you very soon if you do not repent and learn to show charity. You know very well, at your time of life, that you cannot have long to live."

At this sharp reprimand the old friar showed no emotion whatever, either of anger or revenge; but with an indefinable curl of the upper lip, and a cynical look of derision, he replied, with horrible and impious conceit: "Well, if I am to burn I shall have the consolation of not being the only friar in such a predicament; we shall be a large fraternity; that convent will be filled with holy fathers; I shall be in good company there." To this fierce sally he added vilifying and atrocious expressions, and concluded with

scornful mockery: "our lay brethren, employed in the kitchen, will be the best off then; they will not suffer so much from the heat, because they are used to the fire here." At this scandalous scene, the guardian ordered us to retire; but the loathsome spectacle, presented by this shameless old man, was ineffaceable. My heart was bleeding, and I shrunk from it in horror. The bandage was, by degrees, removed from my eyes, and I began to see the wickedness of many of the fraternity. My thoughts reverted to some accounts relating to friars, of which, during the time of my noviciate, I had obtained some imperfect information; but, inexperienced as I then was, they had not made any impression upon me. Now I pondered over them, and formed conclusions from them not too favourable to the sanctity of the fathers.

I, however, strengthened myself in my good resolutions, and determined to avoid following the example of the wicked, and to cling to the path of honour and rectitude. I was fully persuaded that numbers of the monks were exemplary and virtuous men, and in process of time I became acquainted with many such.

Before we proceed with our account of the every-day life of the fathers, and treat of more important matters, it will be well to give a glance at the clerks, the young friars, just out of their novi-

ciate, who are destined to the priesthood. Let us look at them just as the truth is dawning upon them, and they are beginning to repent of the vows they have so unadvisedly taken, and let us try to realize their affliction and despair, the two natural results of their disenchantment. I shall confine myself to a few cases only, as it would occupy too large a space in these revelations to give all the details which I could so easily present to my readers.

Perhaps about half of the clerks, with whom I came in contact, pursued the conventual life without repenting their vows; but it is difficult to form a correct judgment of the number, as, doubtless, there were many, who, although feeling a profound and unconquerable repugnance to the calling they had embraced, still pursued it from conscientious motives; having embraced it in sincerity, they did not feel justified in abandoning it: and as this class would be punctual in the performance of every religious duty, the defection of their hearts would escape notice. Numbers besides will pass unobserved, though their bosoms are swelling with impatience and disgust. They have contracted habits of worldly lust, the more abominable because they are kept secret, and thus hypocrisy steps in to augment the evil. In the secret recesses of their corrupt hearts, these men curse their destiny; but they so care-

fully conceal and mystify their actions and sentiments, that, although in reality among the most degraded of human beings, nothing amiss in their conduct is known, or even suspected, by the casual observer. So that, calculating the numbers of those, whose repentance for having pledged themselves to the monastic life is clearly manifest; of others, whose changed views are kept secret, either from pure or impure motives; it may be fairly inferred that not less than half who take the vows, live to suffer the pains of unavailing regret.

Virtuous principles are so firmly established in the hearts of these young monks; their nature is still so uncorrupted, and their innocence is so unsullied, that the first symptom of disgust of convent life generally manifests itself under the aspect of a holy and natural desire to behold, once more, the beloved faces of their parents and relatives, to inhale again the invigorating air of their native hills and vales, to revisit the spot which gave them birth, and which yields them so many sweet recollections and hallowed associations, connected with childhood's golden hours.

In the Convent were, as I have already stated, three of the companions of my noviciate. One of these, rousing himself from that stupefaction, which he had contracted during the miserable life of a novice, began to experience a return of

affection for the objects of his early love, accompanied by a longing desire to revisit his home and his parents. His feelings had become deadened but not extinguished: now his old affections awoke with redoubled force. Those emotions which had lain dormant, during his long continued state of apathy, now emerged from their torpor with ten-fold energy and vigour. The throb of affection, which pulsated in his heart, was a sacred and elevated feeling. He remembered with grateful love the caresses lavished on him by his tender mother; her gentle accents; her solicitude ever manifest. His bosom heaved with unwonted and ardent emotion, and he felt as if his overcharged heart would burst from its bonds. He thought too of his father, and of the dignified manifestations of affection which he had ever received from him, and he felt an uncontrollable longing to behold him again. Urged by this unutterable yearning after his parents and home, he applied to the superiors for permission to absent himself for a time, alleging that he did not feel well, and wished to breathe his native air, and be taken care of by his mother "By his mother? what need had a monk of a mother? a friar ought to forget his own mother! Did not God Himself take care of a monk, and so much the more as He saw him try to root out of his heart every vestige of earthly affection, and

forget entirely the ties of blood? No! he must learn to hate both father and mother!" So does the papal doctrine pervert the sense of the gospel, and thus falsely interpret it. A friar is not permitted to see his mother again, lest awakened affection for her might weaken his predilection for monastic life!

The opposition which the poor youth encountered did but increase his desire, which grew stronger and stronger every day, and at length became a fierce and indomitable passion, a kind of delirium or mania. The image of his mother was indelibly impressed upon his mind and heart. His mother alone could comfort him in his desolation and mental solitude. Arrived at the age at which the affections and passions glow most ardently, and entirely innocent and unconscious as he was of other affection, the whole energy of his warm nature was concentrated in filial love. He wasted away with consuming anxiety to feast his eyes upon her,—to feel his tears dried and his heart refreshed by the precious tokens of maternal solicitude—to reciprocate her fond caresses, to pillow his head upon the bosom that had nourished him in his infancy. His mother was to him more than all the universe beside; more than life itself. To see her well-remembered face for one single moment, he would joyfully descend into the tomb, he would himself dig up

the earth that was to cover him for ever! This comfort was denied to his soul, in accordance with true monkish subtlety of reasoning. The youth who feels this great longing to return to the haunts of his childhood, to behold once more the beloved faces of those so dear to him, must lose all attachment to the monastic life; indeed this very disaffection naturally springs out of the desire. He is considered a rebel, who deserves to be punished; he is accused of desiring to effect his escape clandestinely, to fly from the convent for ever. These new feelings are interpreted into a species of apostacy which merits punishment, and punished it is accordingly.

The miserable youth seemed completely disheartened at the refusal he met with: it was visible that he was suffering intensely. He ate little and scarcely ever spoke, and the delirious abstraction in which he lived was painful to witness. His monastic functions were executed carelessly, and thus he drew upon himself frequent reproofs and chastisements. His face grew thinner and paler every day; his eyes were sunk in their sockets, and wore a stupid and restless expression. With silent concern we all beheld this poor youth wasting away rapidly. This continued for about two months. One feast day we were celebrating the festival, with solemn pomp, in the church, and a great multitude was

assembled, when suddenly a piercing cry was heard in the centre of the choir, followed by a loud noise as of the fall of a man. The ceremony was interrupted, all the friars and clerks, and I amongst the rest, ran to the unfortunate creature, who had been apparently attacked by a fit of epilepsy, and who proved to be the poor youth. Only the priests who were performing the service at the altar remained in their places. Throughout the church was bustle, and tumult, and quitting of seats; heads were raised, and all eyes were strained to catch a glance at the cause of the emotion. The women, standing on the benches, exalted themselves as much as possible. Enquiries and replies went the round of the assembly. Those who stood near saw that a youth had fallen into terrible convulsions; this they communicated to those nearest them—from them the intelligence spread to the more remote, until it had made the circuit of the church, in a somewhat distorted form; for, as usual, the news lost nothing in its transit.

Water was given to the sufferer, but it was of no use. His teeth were firmly set, his eyes were inverted, so that the pupils were no longer visible; he shivered, ground his teeth, and trembled convulsively, as from cold. A kind of groaning escaped at intervals from the depths of his chest, which was most distressing to hear.

Now and then he commenced an unnatural howl, similar to that uttered by wild animals; for man, in this revolting infirmity, contracts and exhibits the degrading characteristics of beasts, as well in the sounds he emits, as in his hideous aspect, convulsive movements, and the coiling up and relaxing of his limbs. With difficulty could we prevent his head from being dashed to pieces on the pavement, and we were obliged to exert the utmost force to confine his arms, which seemed to possess super-human strength, and would have inflicted fatal injury upon his vigorous frame, if permitted to do so. This violent and rapid motion of the arms is one of the characteristics of this dreadful malady. A thick white foam issued copiously from his mouth, and altogether it would be scarcely possible to conceive a more hideous spectacle.

The service was delayed, but not curtailed. With the assistance of some robust men, who left the church to offer their services, we carried the unconscious youth to his cell. From the other cells I quickly fetched several mattresses, and spread them on the floor. The convulsions continued, accompanied by the grinding of his teeth, and the strangest distortions and howlings. His movements were certainly most extraordinary; sometimes he stood quite erect on his head, with his feet in the air, at which times his body seemed entirely

without joints, so great was the tension of the nerves. When water was thrown upon him, he uttered a sound similar to that made by a horse when it starts in sudden fright. This scene lasted for two hours. At last he gradually came to himself, and we laid him in his bed, in a state of entire helplessness and exhaustion, the natural effects of so terrible a convulsive attack. I ought, perhaps, to have avoided this minute description, for, unacquainted as I am with medical technicalities, I am aware that it must be exceedingly defective in a professional point of view, but I merely describe what I witnessed, and it is not without reason, as the reader will hereafter see, that I have been thus particular.

In epilepsy the first seizure is generally but a prelude to repeated fits; and after the lapse of a week, the poor youth was again the subject of an attack, which was shortly followed by a third. Terrible were the effects which this distressing malady produced on the constitution of the poor lad, and the ruinous traces were visible to all. His cheeks grew so thin and hollow that they looked quite cadaverous. His eyes sunk in their sockets, and assumed a vacant wandering look, like those of a person whose mental faculties are enfeebled, and he became an object of general compassion. His regular attendance in the choir was not insisted upon, and his non-fulfilment of

the duties of his preparatory station was excused. It was still hoped that he would recover. He renewed his request to be allowed to go home for a time, but it was refused from the fear of losing him. Doubtless the superiors argued, that he would soon either get better or get worse. If he recovered, it was much better to keep him in the convent; for if he went home he might obtain a dispensation of secularization, and remain away as a priest, and thus be lost to the convent for ever, and it would be grievous to lose him after he had recovered. If he should get worse, it would then be time enough to send him home, and themselves request his dispensation from Rome. On these selfish grounds they refused the permission he so ardently sought. His attacks became more and more violent. He wasted away until he was really nothing more than a walking skeleton. The superiors were on the point of yielding, seeing that he was so rapidly sinking, and that the drama seemed likely to close precipitately, when one day the provincial came with his secretary to pay a visit to the convent. The latter was one of the fiercest and most unfeeling men imaginable. He exhibited the utmost malice and wickedness, and was a complete tyrant to the friars. Whenever I want to imagine an inhuman despot, the figure of that man presents itself to my mind. Of mercy and

pity he was altogether destitute. Was any one to be punished, he was always in favour of the most rigorous punishment. The slightest errors were, in his eyes, atrocious crimes, and as such he would have punished them. The commands of the provincial, transmitted through him, were oppressive, inhuman, and inflexible. It happened that he arrived at the convent just as the poor youth was suffering from his malady. He was lying in his cell, the floor of which was spread with mattresses, that he might not injure himself on the bare ground, by the furious contortions and convulsive movements of his head and limbs. There he lay, when the secretary, who had heard of the case, came to the door of the cell, and saw the sufferer in one of his most dreadful fits, tossing about with frenzied fury. I was among those who were assisting him; and, raising my eyes, I beheld the stern countenance of the visitor. His eyes were fixed on the poor youth with a most malicious expression, and sparkled with cruel mockery, while the disdainful curl of his upper lip betrayed incredulity, and his countenance, far from manifesting compassion or even indifference, assumed a most insulting air. He seemed like an evil genius, elaborating the woes of mankind out of the crucible of his own wicked passions, and he appeared to triumph in his productions, as the workman rejoices over the tokens

of his skill. My heart shrunk within me as I caught this diabolical expression, so portentous of evil.

The man that is sceptical of the sufferings of his fellow-creatures, or whose feelings remain unmoved by them, is scarcely less impious than he who denies his Maker. Grief and pain are the lot of man; but the Almighty is worthy of highest honour and gratitude, for having put a heart into our breasts, capable of feeling for the sorrows of our kind. As I looked at this man, however, I conceived a sentiment of horror, which tended much to strengthen my new impressions of the wickedness of the friars. He did not speak, nor advance a step; he only shook his head with an incredulous smile, and left the cell, accompanied by the guardian, exclaiming, as he turned away: "This is an imposture. It is a pretended illness. You must remain firm in refusing—he will get over it." I heard these words, which were spoken aloud; they seemed most atrocious, and fell upon my ear like the grating of a file upon iron. An arrow shot at random sometimes hits the mark, and I am now inclined to believe that the secretary's opinion was correct: I have been assured by medical men of eminence that all the appearances of epilepsy may be thus assumed. The guardian, however, did not understand the disease, even if, for once, his

naturally bad disposition enabled him to arrive at a correct conclusion.

After these words of the secretary, the violence of the patient abated, and the fit terminated very differently from the former ones. The assumed illness now lacked the efficacy of the inspiration which it had before derived from the confidence of the youth, that it was believed to be real. I did not notice, at the time, the difference in the symtoms, but it occurred to me afterwards, in reflecting on what followed. When he had recovered from the paroxysm, he went to the superior, with a sad and disappointed mien, to complain of his great sufferings. The superior did not accuse him of malingering, nor reproach him for it; being, perhaps, unwilling to do so on a mere suspicion; but he treated him with reserve, bordering on incredulity: the youth became frightened, and, losing his presence of mind, said imprudently: "indeed, the father secretary's want of charity has grieved me very much." "Why?" asked the provincial, quite startled. "He had the cruelty to say that my terrible illness was all pretended: pretended, indeed! when it is wearing my life away!" "How do you know that the secretary said so?" "Because," said the unguarded youth, "I heard him myself when he left my cell." This unfortunate avowal sealed his doom. "Oh! so you

heard him yourself, did you? Your fit was just at its crisis; how could you hear him if your illness was real? you are become your own accuser. Get along! You need not expect any more compassion from us, deceitful impostor." The youth withdrew in shame and anger.

Some of my readers may think that there was not sufficient proof that the illness was pretended. I have heard it asserted more than once, that in cases of epilepsy, catalepsy, or other diseases of the kind, which occasion an appearance of stupor, similar to that of death itself, the reasoning faculties are frequently in full vigour, and the senses, especially that of hearing, are very acute. It may, therefore, perhaps, be argued that the patient, whilst he was in convulsions, would still hear the remarks of the secretary, and comprehend their meaning. Granting this, as a general rule, I still fear that in the case before us, the illness was assumed. Seeing himself suspected, and finding that the expedient of epilepsy would no longer serve his purpose, he had no further attacks. He recovered his health to a certain extent, and abstained for the future from sueing for permission to go home. The occurrence was, however, a continual source of persecution and grievance to him. The story of his illness became known, and the friars looked upon him as a semi-apostate brother, hostile to his order, who by art

and cunning had contrived to deceive them, by assuming the appearance of a fearful and humiliating malady. He never was suffered to enjoy peace during all the years that I knew him, or heard of him. He was continually accused and tormented, and he led a wretched life. Perhaps his punishment was merited, for he played a wicked and hazardous game, on which he staked his peace, and lost it! But my readers will rather pity than blame him, if they consider that he stooped to this ignoble artifice to obtain a noble end. His heart was bursting with immense love to his mother; grief was corroding the very fibres of his life; he became desperate; and so intense was his desire to obtain his object, that he consented to make himself an odious spectacle. He assumed voluntarily the aspect of a maniac, and appeared before his fellow-creatures a loathsome and horrible object. All this he suffered from the hope of accomplishing his end! The unfortunate youth, culpable as he certainly was, in framing and executing this abominable device, will still find sympathy in feeling hearts, and most assuredly the hearts of mothers will exonerate him. His frame was so weakened by his struggles, and the personal injuries he sustained in consequence, that he ever remained the subject of great suffering; and his health never recovered entirely from the effects of his grievous folly.

Another case occurred among the clerks, of a character somewhat similar, which, though not carried quite as far, was still mournful enough. These are evident proofs that, among the very young members of the fraternity, repentance is not occasioned by the awakening of vicious passions, but by an instinctive disgust to that unnatural mode of life, which they are compelled to adopt, in accordance with their vows. The condition of a friar is that of a man whose shoulders are laden with a burden too weighty for them; and when the youth recovers from the blindness, with which he has been smitten during the noviciate, he tries, with all his might, to rid himself of the burden.

This clerk experienced the same desire to see his parents, to revisit his native place, but he did not pretend to be ill, or resort to any artifice. He was naturally of a very frank disposition, and his manners were somewhat rough; and altogether he was far more fit for the army than for the humiliations of monkish life. He presented himself before the guardian, not with downcast eyes, but with a free and open, possibly a bold look. Regarding him undauntedly, and speaking in a tone of confidence, instead of the humble conventual drawl, he said, "father guardian, I am already bound by my vows, and I do not repent belonging to

the brotherhood of the Capuchins, but I feel in my heart a desire, which I think cannot be offensive, either to human or divine laws: I have an earnest desire to see my mother again. You, father, once had a mother; no doubt you loved her very dearly. You will not refuse my request, I am sure. You will allow me to see my mother, to give her this great pleasure, and receive her blessing."

The manner of the request was irregular, but it was not disrespectful; neither was it a demand contrary to morality, religion, or the strictest observance of the gospel: but little did that signify! it was an offence against monastic laws, which, it will now be seen, are not modelled on the principles of morality or the gospel. Therefore his request was refused, the manner was reproved, and he was chastised: and all this less as the result of the individual malevolence of the guardian, than of the inherent vice of the monastic system. The bold petitioner was treated as a rebel, for having entreated permission to see his mother, for having requested it with the dignity becoming a man, and not with the cringing air of an abject slave; and for this he was punished with bread and water, the discipline, and a vast deal beside. The influences which, during the noviciate, had kept in abeyance the natural haughtiness of the youth, were now

withdrawn. He was no longer a novice, and a few months passed with the friars, during the preparatory year, had completely undeceived him with regard to their sanctity. No longer subdued by holy fear and awe, and ardent as he was by nature, he bravely shook off the yoke, and showed his indignation at the shameful treatment he received. As a consequence, the punishments were renewed, and with increased severity. From that time he was engaged in a perpetual warfare. To tame his fierce disposition was a task of no little difficulty; but the superior is a good disciplinarian, and is famous for subduing the ferocity of human nature. Treating man like the wild beast, undauntedly he faces him. Eye meets eye; that of the creature about to be tamed sparkles with indignation and vengeful desire; that of the tamer glistens with strength of will, and the consciousness of human superiority:

"Erect, with front serene, he stands;"

while his victim shows his teeth, and manifests a desire to rend the flesh of his enslaver. The tamer, with menacing gesture, brandishes the whip in his clenched hand; the brute trembles, shudders, fills the air with his tremendous roaring: the stern master, by the tone of his voice, the steady glance of his eye, and the cracking of the whip, intimidates, and finally subdues him. This is no unapt simile of the fate of the

clerks, who venture to oppose the will of their superiors. They are scourged and intimidated by the look and voice of the fearless tamer, and they end by being vanquished and reduced to obedience. The present instance forms no exception to the rule.

It was my week to fill the office of sacristan, and, consequently, the care of everything in the church and sacristy devolved upon me. In the choir are placed boxes filled with sawdust, for the use of the friars, who, especially the old ones, experience great fatigue from reading the service for hours together, in a loud voice; and one of these boxes is placed for each, and the sacristan has to see that they are kept in order by the clerks, his companions. On that day I had given them into the charge of brother F—, the yet untamed animal alluded to. It was the time for vespers, three o'clock in the afternoon. The guardian took his place, and his eye fell upon his box. He there observed some letters traced, which must have been made with a stick. He read them, and his face immediately grew red with anger, and he called me into the choir. Seeing the storm that was about to burst, I obeyed tremblingly. "Read that!" exclaimed he. I read the words: "villanous guardian." In my consternation I stood there as if thunderstruck—not one word could I utter. "Who

wrote that?" asked he, in a voice of passion; but not as if he suspected me; he well knew that I was incapable of such an act. "I do not know, father," I replied, with a tremulous voice. "But you can guess. Who cleaned the boxes this morning?" "Brother F——," I replied, in a low tone. "Oh then, it was he; there is no doubt about it. His guilt is certain. Nobody but that incorrigible lad would have committed this flagrant crime. There is not a prouder or more stubborn fellow in any convent in the world. That is enough; you can go." Scarcely knowing where I was, I left in the utmost confusion.

The guardian then summoned brother F—— to appear before him immediately, in the choir. "You are the wicked wretch that dared to write 'villanous guardian' in my box." The youth, assuming a look of utter defiance, answered, "I am, and I meant it too, and I do not deny it." The guardian was furious.

Some crimes there are, which particularly enrage the superiors, because they cannot exactly find a punishment prescribed to meet them. Imprisonment is used in cases of uncertainty, but this was hardly serious enough for that. The guardian's indignation and irritation were much increased, therefore, by the fact that there was no specified punishment which he could inflict upon this rebel, except such as were constantly

imposed for minor offences. Still he was fully determined that the daring offender should not escape, and, devouring his rage, he ordered him bread and water, and commanded him to make the cross with his tongue throughout the refectory. Severe as was this chastisement, the guardian considered it as nothing compared with the offence, and he resolved to watch him closely, and seize the first occasion of further tormenting him. In the refectory a sharp and lengthy reprimand was given, and the punishment was carried out. The youth was silent; a single word of reply would have caused him to be imprisoned; but he performed the penance with the most provoking indifference, after having listened to the reprimand in the same manner.

The next day I was the first to enter the sacristy, and I commenced arranging everything for mass. I opened the book in which the masses are registered, and left it upon the bench. In each church such a book is kept, by way of check; and every priest has, besides, his private one, in which to register the alms he receives. My companions came to assist me, the culprit among the number. We were all busy arranging everything, and laying out the sacerdotal ornaments for the mass, except brother F——, who was intent on other matters. We paid no heed to him, however, thinking he might still be

suffering from the effects of the previous day's punishment, which would have been no wonder. But, unobserved by us, he was again getting into mischief, which brought upon him a still more serious punishment. The guardian, as usual, was the first who came down to say mass, and, according to rule, he went immediately to the book, and took up a pen to inscribe his name. But the space was already occupied by large letters, which formed words of strange meaning. In characters so large as to take up the greater part of the page, was written, "I, F——, from N——, have already been condemned to twenty-five rations of bread and water, besides other penances, and the cross in the refectory, by that villanous guardian and wicked Capuchin, father N——." Passion rages in the breast of a monk with greater fury than in the bosom of any other man. Like the suppressed flame which has acquired strength to burst through the bonds that restrained it, it rages with the greater fury, and is the more destructive, in consequence of its previous suppression. The face of the holy guardian became first of an ashy paleness, from the violence of his fury, and then it changed to crimson. His excitement was too great to allow him to speak intelligibly, but he gave a roar, and his eyes flashed with hatred. He vowed to be revenged; nor can it excite

surprise, for such insolence and audacity are rarely met with in a convent, and were to him really astounding. The father now felt at liberty to inflict any punishment he chose, and he covered the severity of anger and revenge under the pretence of justice and salutary rigour. He declared that the offender, who vilified holy persons, was guilty of sacrilege. He said he should have forgiven it had it been a personal injury; but that the venerable order of the Capuchins was insulted, in his person, and all the superiors, by an indignity offered to him, a superior. Insubordination and rebellion must be severely punished, or their effects would be most injurious upon the other youths.

Chains, imprisonment, scourging, rigorous fasting, and so on, will now present themselves to the mind of the reader. But no, such punishments are too common place. Imprisonment would but have hardened his haughty mind. Nothing daunted, he would have shown himself indifferent to it, and instead of a humiliation it would have been a triumph to him, and the father would have been the loser. No, he must be touched to the quick, his pride must be brought down, he must be humbled to the dust; then, and then only, would vengeance be satisfied. At any cost he must be subdued, and this lion's heart must become gentle as that of a lamb.

The monks are sure to gain the victory, their opponents always succumb. The culprit was removed from the convent, and sent to another, where full particulars were afforded of his past conduct, and he was represented as the most wicked and corrupt youth in the order, and it was requested that he might be set to wash dishes in the kitchen!

That proud and daring youth was really placed in the kitchen, beneath the lay brethren, who are the domestics in the convent, and was compelled to mix with the lowest in the place. The whole day long he was in the dirty scullery, occupied in washing the plates and dishes which left the tables of the greedy friars. He was actually condemned to soil his hands with the dirty saucepans, and do the bidding of the lowest of the servants. They haughtily ordered him about, luxuriating in the enjoyment of being able, for once, to command, and rejoicing to see one apparently destined to fill the place of holy friar, reduced even below their own abject concondition. I know not how long the miserable youth remained in this sad condition. He certainly was there for a considerable time, perhaps for several months. The stain of such a punishment is indelible. The novices perform this office from a spirit of humility; but a clerk who has once been condemned to it, in expiation of

an offence, is ever afterwards despised by the community.

Another youth had to suffer trials still harder. He was one of those who become friars from really penitential motives, and with the idea of living a life of holiness. His was a voluntary and decided vocation, and had he found the convents peopled by such men as he believed the monks to be, no doubt he would himself have become a burning and a shining light, intent, according to the erroneous doctrines of Rome, upon laying up treasures of spiritual merit. But alas! he found the reality the very reverse of the picture of his fancy, and his zeal very soon cooled. During the probationary term of noviciate, he abstained from infringing, in the slightest degree, the very strict rules of the order. He was among the most fervent and exact. The spirit of piety moved him to perform every duty voluntarily; to bear long and patiently, and even to suffer with inward rejoicing. Far from believing him guilty of any serious transgression, I should not even have suspected him capable of the slightest dereliction of duty. But a change took place. The cruelty of the friars plunged him into an abyss in which he was irrecoverably lost. When I think of him, even now—of his docility and his sad end—my heart melts, and my eyes suffuse with tears. He

had to take his turn with the rest, as sacristan, and thus it devolved upon him to wake the others for the midnight service in the choir. One night the sound of the alarum failed to awake him thoroughly: he was drowsy and fell asleep again. The guardian made the round of the convent with the rattle in his hand, and perceiving that a dead silence reigned throughout, and that no one was stirring, he proceeded to the cell of the sacristan, whose duty it was to summon the rest. He entered, and seeing that the youth was not yet up, in his impatient anger, and in the dark, he dealt him a severe blow upon the head with the rattle. The violence of the blow, from this heavy wood and iron instrument, must have hurt him very seriously, but happily his head escaped a fracture. He rose, much frightened, and in great pain; but he was able to go the round, call the friars, and assist in the service.

This was a day of misfortune to him, and determined his fate. A sad fate it proved! In the morning it was again his turn to get up and call the others. But he failed once more. Perhaps the blow which he had received stupified him. The guardian again made the round of the corridors; not a soul was astir: again, he went to the cell of the sacristan; again, he found him asleep; again, a blow was struck, and this time

harder than the first. The rattle was not employed on this occasion, but the cane,* another monkish instrument.

This cane was brought in violent contact with the head of the unfortunate sleeper, and happy it was for him that nature had provided him with a scull substantial enough to resist the blow; but the ill-fated novice felt indignant that he, a man, a creature of flesh and blood, should be treated as if he were a marble statue, insensible of pain. To be thus attacked, without feeling an inclination to retaliate, is more than can be expected of human nature. He was young; the blood mounted to his temples, and he was sorely tempted to give a reply in kind; but he refrained. He however committed a greater enormity. He escaped from the convent, and made his way straight to Rome, to lay a complaint against the guardian. But the complaint unfortunately turned against himself, for daring, after profession, to leave his convent. Had he presented himself at Rome, in a mutilated condition, it is very doubtful if he would have met with a favourable reception, and if

* The cane is a short stick, with seven thin and flexible pieces of wood fixed close together, at one end of the stick, whilst at the other they dangle about loose, so that when moved by the hand, or struck against the palm of the other hand, they make a very loud and unpleasant noise.

justice would have been accorded to him; but going, as he did, bearing no visible signs of maltreatment, it was altogether vain to look for redress. The case was considered, and the decision was against him. The general and his menials were of opinion that he ought to submit in every respect to his superiors—even to be killed—without a murmur; and because he had not submitted quietly, he was immediately consigned to the prison of a convent. He was not sent back to his own convent, but to another in the same province, and the guardian of the convent he had left aggravated the charges against him, giving the most unfavourable accounts of the affair; so that the case became generally known, and the poor youth never recovered his standing. When once a fault of this kind has been committed, it is vain to hope for forgiveness. All the superiors of the convents seem to have entered into a compact to persecute the transgressor, even unto death. The greater part of the friars conspired to heap upon him indignities of every description, and every imaginable insult and slight. The civil law is much less unmerciful. When the culprit has submitted to the punishment, and borne the penalty, he is reinstated in his former rights. But monkish justice is of a different kind; it excludes all idea of mercy, and the punishment lasts as long as life itself. The miserable victim is the object

of the ill treatment of superiors, friars, clerks, lay brothers; all, down to the very scullions.

After being released from prison, the young man found it impossible to endure the life to which he was condemned. Rage took possession of his soul, and he began to hate the friars with invincible disgust. He looked upon them in the light of fiends, and, unable to endure their society, he again made his escape. For several weeks he wandered about from place to place, avoiding observation as much as possible. The monk's frock which he wore served as some protection to him, and the continual terror of being discovered and taken made him cunning and vigilant. He went from house to house; sometimes he was the guest of peasants, whose hospitality was secured by his garb; then again he visited the benefactors of the convent, whose names he happened to know. For some time he remained undiscovered; but at last, after numerous researches and investigations on the part of his unwearied persecutors, he was captured, and conducted back to the convent like a malefactor. His fault was considered as past forgiveness: he was punished as if he had committed the most atrocious crime. Thrown into the dark prison of a convent, which was horribly damp, mouldy, and full of vermin, he was chained down, and in that condition remained a long time. No doubt his persecutors

intended that he should remain there for years. He never sought forgiveness; his only thought was of vengeance; but he experienced, to his desperation, that he was too impotent to revenge himself. His soul became hardened by punishment and seclusion: he had no longer recourse to God by prayer. The divine example afforded to men by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, of suffering every imaginable hardship with magnanimous resignation, was valueless to him; it softened not his heart; that heart that had been so contrite was now become too fierce to meditate on the meekness of Christ.

A lay-brother brought him daily his scanty supply of food. On one of these occasions his jailer, moved by compassion for the miserable state of the unfortunate prisoner, said to him gently, in a tone of kindness, "Oh! my brother, implore the divine aid of the holy Virgin; perhaps she may be able to change your condition." The youth, who had become quite brutish, assumed a demoniacal expression of countenance, and with glaring eyes, and grinding teeth, exclaimed, "Implore aid of the devil rather!" The poor brother was so horrified that he nearly let fall the provisions which he had brought: setting them down hastily, he left the cell, as if dreading to be contaminated by breathing the same air as this monster of impiety.

How often did he examine, with powerless hands, the heavy, strong, clanking chains which bound him: feeling their weight he would start suddenly, and, with a cry of phrenzied rage, he would curse the monks, and call down the wrath of God upon them. One day, while twisting and shaking his chains with restless energy, he heard a hollow sound proceed from one of the links: with a beating heart he renewed his efforts, and discovered that the unaccustomed sound proceeded from the link to which the padlock was fastened. He felt a slight hope that the lock might be forced open by renewed exertions. With the strength inspired by desperation, he recommenced his endeavours; he tried, and tried again, until at last he succeeded, and the padlock yielded! A flash of ferocious joy lighted up his eyes. He had broken his bonds: he was free from his chains: he could fly without hindrance. The difficulties still to be overcome naturally presented themselves to his mind. His cell was enclosed by three doors, how were they to be opened? how was he to clear them? In the impetuous excitement of his mind, he speedily formed a plan. The dinner hour was at hand. He replaced the padlock and closed it again. His dinner came and he ate it as usual. When the jailer returned to take away the plates, the prisoner, assuming an

air of humility, and speaking in a faint supplicating tone of voice, said, "My good brother, I am so dreadfully hungry to-day; have pity upon me in my tribulation. Do be charitable and fetch me a little more food."

The jailer could scarcely believe his senses. Was it possible that the prisoner, hitherto so unmanageable and ferocious, could now be so docile, so completely changed! He felt moved at seeing him so quiet, and complied. He thought it advisable to encourage so salutary a change by acceding to his request probably, or he experienced feelings of pure compassion for him. He went back to the kitchen for a further supply, and, as the youth had foreseen, left the doors open. Chained as the prisoner was, he could not, of course, suspect his design of flying. The prisoner, with a temerity inspired by the danger, threw off his chains and made his escape. He found himself in the open air, free to enjoy the liberty he had so unexpectedly gained. The sentinels, having no suspicion of the truth, allowed him to pass without hindrance, and he gained the fields and open country. He wandered about from city to city, from province to province, meeting occasionally with a kind reception in private houses or convents. But his sense of honour was deadened, and he became a thief. He robbed a family which had

received him kindly. On that occasion, however, he escaped detection. Crime, and the circumstances in which he was placed, rendered him so audacious, that he entered a convent of a different order where he was generously fed and lodged. There he laid hands upon a silver censer, stole it, and fled. For this crime he was seized by the police, and carried before the judge. His trial and conviction followed, and he was sentenced to a long term of labour at the galleys of Narni, where he died twelve months after. I was called upon to attend him, as priest, in his dying hour. He manifested signs of penitence, but declared that he preferred the galleys to the convent. In this tragical occurrence, the principal blame must rest upon the guardian. By his cruelty and rigour, he caused the destruction of the youth. His must be considered a heavy crime, and one to render him amenable to the indignation of God and man.

God sometimes punishes sinners in this life, to show that He visits the sins of the guilty one upon his own head, and that He will sit in judgment upon him at the last day. This should be a warning to the wicked, and a consolation to the just, as proving, clearly, that both good and evil are taken cognizance of "by Him with whom we have to do."

A year had scarcely elapsed since the sad

occurrence just related, when the guardian was seized with a dangerous illness. His malady was most alarming, and proved fatal. His life was clearly drawing to a close, and the doctor announced to him the probability of his speedy dissolution. The little chamber in which he lay was nicely decorated with books and furniture, which, if not costly, were as select as a friar could have them. Perhaps, hidden away, he possessed a few valuable objects. By convent rule, and in accordance with his vow of poverty, a friar is forbidden to possess anything; but he contrives virtually to explain away this part of his vow. By giving the votive oath an extended interpretation—by mentally separating the use of a thing from its ownership—the friars can enjoy this world's goods without professing to call them their own. When a friar is about to die, one of his brother monks goes to him and receives from him the renunciation of everything, in order that he may die in the state of poverty required by his vow. Simple as this appears, it is a most important business; for the friars, precluded from absolutely owning riches, attach themselves to such a degree to their small possessions, that they really are misers, whose hearts are in their bags. Covetousness is inherent in human nature; but under no circumstances is it more distinctly manifested than in

the attachment of the friars to the trifling objects which they manage to accumulate. The guardian offered a striking exemplification of this rule. Upon being told that he must resign everything, he felt as if he had been commanded to tear the heart from his breast. One of the friars had assumed the duties of his office *ad interim*, and he now went to the bed-side of the dying man. "Father," said he, in a gently admonitory tone, "you are near the brink of eternity, your days on earth are few and numbered. Repent of your sins, and heaven will open before your sight to receive your soul. You must do what is absolutely required of every good friar, of every one who has his salvation at heart. You made a vow of poverty; but the rule of the convent has allowed you the use of these few things which surround you. Now you must prove that your heart is not set upon them; you must die in that state of poverty in which you promised to live. You are called upon humbly to renounce all these things, that there may not be even a suspicion that your affections were fixed upon them." "What! what do you mean?" broke forth the dying man, half raising himself in bed, fury depicted in his face. "These are my things, my own property, nobody can take them from me; only death can deprive me of them, and I am not yet dead. Mine! these

things are mine; you want to hasten my death, to make them yours!" The poor father, frightened and horrified, left the room. Nothing could pacify the dying man. He became more and more restless. Delirious craving for earthly goods incessantly tormented him. He screamed aloud for hours. Maniacal yells escaped him; nothing availed to quiet him. In this intense state of excitement he died, unrepenting of the breach of his vow; nor was his body permitted to lie in consecrated ground. The devout ones said that it was the judgment of God upon him, for his conduct towards the poor youth, whose destruction he had compassed.

I had been but about four months in this new convent, when an occurrence took place which excited the utmost consternation, not only in the convents of the province, but throughout Italy. I give this incident a place here, as one eminently calculated to show how utterly false is the position of the monks. In the convent of P——was a young man, who, during his noviciate, exhibited no symptoms of character to indicate that his after career would prove what it did. He was very young, and all emotions slept in his breast. While subjected to the rigours of the noviciate, his mind was filled with zeal: the demands of nature were silenced for a time, and the liveliness of youthful spirit was held in abeyance.

He might fitly have been compared to a lion's whelp, torn from its mother's grasp, placed in a cage adapted to his present size, reared, caressed, whilst his natural strength and innate ferocity are still undeveloped. But trust not that he will remain thus inoffensive. His claws will grow formidable, his teeth will wax strong, his roar will become tremendous, he will feel indignant at the iron bars which hold him captive: and woe! if he escape from his prison. Just so was it with the novice. He was yet harmless. Nor teeth nor claws had he to inspire fear. Strength and fierceness were still lacking. But ere long his slumbering passions were roused. A short time after the completion of his noviciate, a change was manifested in his deportment. He was possessed of a fiery temperament and a very robust frame, with limbs powerfully developed. Gifted with a luxuriant imagination, it was not surprising that in him human emotions should develope themselves with more than common vehemence. He felt himself a man: and a man he was of an ardent nature, indomitable spirit, and irrepressible desires. His eyes fell upon forbidden objects; and he averted not his glance, but yielded to a temptation which proved too strong for his intellect. The ardour of his newly awakened feelings was boundless, illimitable. The blood coursed through his veins like a stream

of lava, or like a consuming fire. He was now daring, fierce, and untameable. Punishment after punishment was dealt out to him. His excitement increased, his rage waxed stronger and stronger, and the voice of nature spoke more imperiously. He abhorred both friars and convent trammels. He defied his oppressors and cursed his tyrants. Now he pondered over the circumstances of his profession, searching closely and examining attentively the arguments, seductions, and frauds, employed to induce him to pronounce the fatal vows. He felt that he never ought to have made them, that he pronounced them blindly; that without knowing what he did, led astray by monkish subtlety, at an age when he was unable to appreciate the importance of the act, he was betrayed into receiving the accursed vows. One day, while suffering under the infliction of punishment, which his persecutors unrelentingly meted out to him, his violence exhaled in a phrenzy of rage, of mingled fury and passion. His whole frame was convulsively agitated, and in terrible accents he exclaimed: "These vows are invalid. I am not a friar; you led me, you seduced me infamously to pronounce words the meaning of which was a mystery to me, the weight of which I could not feel. I took the vows in blindness, in folly, without knowing what I did; they cannot be binding. I

will no longer be a friar,—I will go away freely, —I will do my own pleasure,—I leave the order, —my vows are null and void,—I will do as I please,—I will marry!"

The forbearance of the monks was now at an end. They declared him a scandalous sinner, guilty of the most outrageous blasphemy, whose enormities were no longer to be endured; among the good and pure, he could no longer be suffered to remain: to a world full of wickedness he must not return. He was bound by his vows, nor would they release him. Even the Pope himself could not free him from them. This infected member which corrupted the body must be cut off. The pollution must be stayed. Prison was the only resource. There he might rave unheeded. The only remedy, the only way to save the convent from shame, to avoid scandal in the world, was to confine him. So he was taken and cast into prison. I might pause to describe the frightful convent prisons, but it is unnecessary. Who has not read the annals of the Holy Inquisition? Who has not been horrified at the description of its dungeons; their dampness, their obscurity, their fœtid atmosphere, their disgusting vermin, the loathsome produce of putrefaction; their walls impregnated with humidity, their filthy floors covered with every species of impurity? Such was his abode, and there he

existed many months. There he tasted of death in many a bitter draught. When he broke out into any excess, his scanty supply of food was still more curtailed; scourging was repeated, his chains were made heavier, and pressed harder on his tortured limbs. He had no hope of escape, no means of alleviating his heavy doom.

One day the city of Perugia was the scene of a strange occurrence. On this occasion, I depart from the rule which, from prudential motives, I have laid down, of keeping silent the names of persons and places referred to in my narrative. In a case of so serious importance, however, as the one I am about to narrate, it seems to me that an additional warrant for its veracity may not be unacceptable to the reader.

A wealthy inhabitant of Perugia died. The rich retain their splendour even after death; they carry it with them to the tomb. The magnificence of the preparations, the torch-light, the music, all serve to recall the festive scenes of life; the parade seems almost an insult offered to the powerful tyrant, death. But death derides human vanity; he has secured his prey, no mortal can deprive him of it. The coffin, covered with rich black velvet of finest texture, the most exquisite music, the pageantry, the marble tablet, the pompous inscription; nothing will rekindle the spark of life that has fled for ever,

nothing will infuse warmth into that cold mass, so rigid, and so inanimate. That body will soon decay: dust will be restored to dust. Death is no respecter of persons. With equal affection does he embrace his victim, whether it be the crowned head, or the very outcast of a nation—aye, even the Pariah!

All the friars were invited to this funeral, and a most welcome invitation it was; for it promised them a day of great gain. Not gain in a spiritual sense alone, but in a worldly point of view as well;—a day for obtaining a large sum of money.

That morning, one of the younger brothers went to see the poor prisoner. He paid him this visit, not with any intention of upbraiding or ill-treating him, but, actuated by motives of brotherly love, he went with the hope of being able to comfort him in his affliction. He was one of the best of the friars, and was pious and humane. It is a consolation to reflect that the excessive rigour of conventual discipline, which corrupts and perverts so many, still leaves a considerable portion untainted, kind, virtuous, and charitable. This consideration goes far to reconcile me to the recollection of that portion of my life, spent amidst influences so directly opposed to every thing that is "lovely and of good report."

This kind young brother found the poor youth

in a composed, quiet, and gentle frame of mind; and, as it appeared to him, touched with compunction for his past violence. He believed that the paroxysm was past, that he had recovered from his madness; and he felt a great desire to alleviate his present miserable condition, to restore him to life, to see him readmitted into the society of the fathers. He left the prisoner, and went to the father guardian, and, by his persuasions, prevailed upon the superiors to allow him to take the unhappy youth out that morning for a walk. If he behaved well, and really manifested signs of contrition, he was to be allowed to take him to the funeral. But, at the same time, the guardian charged him with the entire responsibility. He was to undertake that every thing should go on quietly, and that no disturbance should arise, so that the guardian might have no cause to repent of his compliance. So the matter was settled. But "man proposes, and God disposes!" They went for a walk together, and the culprit behaved with perfect propriety. The friar thought himself quite at liberty to allow him to enter the cathedral, where the grand funeral service was to take place, in order that he might take a part in the religious ceremonies, and share in the profit. The ceremonies had commenced. The mournful chaunting of the obsequies resounded in doleful

harmony through the church. It was a magnificent and imposing sight, and was contrived, as are all the spectacles of the Roman Catholic church service, with a view to effect. The "Miserere" was recited with deep and monotonous accents over the dead body. The "De profundis," that awe inspiring hymn, had been pronounced; "Dies iræ" had been sung in sad, deep, harmonious tones. This is doubtless one of the grandest productions of the middle ages; and it is, perhaps, rendered more impressive, more terrible in its sublime and profound conception, by the barbarous Latin and uncouth versification in which it is clothed. All that the genius of Italy was able to produce, by the aid of harmony, was put in requisition to adapt the most sublime and touching strains to this awful poem. That hymn was sung; then followed the "Requiem." The crowd in the church was immense. Every body had been attracted by the funeral of one of the most distinguished persons in the town. The torches were distributed among the priests and friars, and the service was proceeding, when suddenly an acute cry burst forth from a female voice, interrupting and rising high above the solemn "Requiem." The service was disturbed, the crowd was instantly in commotion, the church was a scene of confusion. At the living indescribable picture which there

presented itself; it seemed as if the very walls shook with horror, as if the building itself was giving way, as if the saints of the altars veiled their faces in horror; as if the dead man himself, about to be interred, lifted up his head, in utter astonishment.

With flaming eyes, and violently convulsed face, stood the lunatic friar, tightly grasping, in close embrace, a young lady from whom had proceeded the agonized shriek. Suddenly darting from the side of his attendant, and flinging himself forward, he had seized his prey, as the kite pounces upon his quarry, and before he is seen or heard, strikes his talons into its body, and carries it off. Screaming aloud, he declared that he was not a monk, that his vows were null and void, that he was free! The spectacle was most terrible. The boiling passions, at the climax of their phrenzy, in presence of the silence of the grave. The fire of youth, the ardour of life, in contrast with the rigidity of him in whom life was extinct, who felt no longer passion's force, whose blood was congealed in his veins, and for ever. The sad and monotonous sounds of the grave song were interrupted by the full, vigorous, fierce, indomitable accents of youth, bursting forth in the height of fury and manly energy. Repressed by cruel, unnatural laws, they burst forth at that moment most disastrously and inopportunely.

The monk's screams, as he pressed the girl closely to himself in desperate embrace,—her cries of despairing terror,—the sounds of horror which arise from the hundreds and hundreds of spectators at so novel and terrifying an event,—the rage, the shame, the despair of the friars, who feel themselves dishonoured, and their order rendered infamous for ever,—the commotion, the tumult of the agitated crowd, moving in every direction,—all produced a spectacle defying the power of the pen to describe. The man appeared like a famished wolf seizing his prey, and imminent was the danger of the girl, for in the terror of the moment, no one ventured to free her from his grasp. The first emotion, however, having somewhat subsided, several of the most courageous ventured to advance towards the maniac; but neither one nor two sufficed to separate him from his victim. He held her tightly grasped in his arms; his teeth were set; his eyes rolled fiercely; and he uttered wild and broken yells. One endeavoured to pull him back, by seizing his frock, nearly tearing it to pieces; another seized him by the neck, pressing him tightly to force him by suffocation to loosen his arms, and open the hands which held so tightly his panic-struck and almost dying victim. One, bolder than the rest, threw his arms around both the assailant and his victim;

but the friar, in endeavouring to free himself, turned round and round, as if he were trying to cast off a group of serpents which were coiled about him. Some struck him heavy blows upon his head with their hands; others used sticks, thinking it better even to lay him dead on the ground, than that the tumult should be prolonged. The friars, meanwhile, were in a state of utter desperation. Some wept, some called down curses on the head of the impious profaner of the sacred place, who had so dishonoured the garb he wore. Others implored that an end might be put to the scandalous scene, and some engaged in the strife against him. The women filled the church with their shrieks, and the men were violently agitated. The sacristans rushed in haste, bearing the long poles which are used in lighting the candles, at first, unconscious of the cause of the tumult. Some there were who, with an air of derision, an undaunted eye, and scornful smile, rendered assistance willingly, and beheld it all, unmoved by any other feeling than triumph over the monks. If these laughed not with their lips, yet the expression of their eyes showed sufficiently that the humiliation of the monks was most welcome to them.

At length the drama closes. The poor girl, more dead than alive, is rescued and borne away; the friars, overwhelmed with shame, retire; the maniac is dragged into the convent.

Thence, amidst cries of indignation and imprecations on all sides, loaded with chains, he was taken to a dungeon, where he was scourged and tormented. Eighteen years after the occurrence he was still incarcerated. As long as I remained a friar he was kept in prison. Perhaps he lingers there still, destined to wear out the remainder of his days, cursing the friars, the convent, and the vows.

What sad reflections must such an event call forth! If he were mad, he surely did not deserve to be imprisoned. If he were not a maniac, by what right was he kept in durance for so many years? The stain and dishonour he brought upon his profession were too great ever to be pardoned by his order; and his unrelenting persecutors determined that his punishment should, if possible, equal in duration the consequences of his guilt. I content myself with asking a single question. Is not such a case, in itself, sufficient to bring discredit on all monastic orders? An event like this is unheard of, nor could it occur, among the Protestant churches. I would willingly here conclude my narration, perhaps already too protracted, of the incidents occurring among the clerks after profession. The subject, however, allows of great amplification, and there is one more example which I think I ought to give.

Let the attentive reader reflect that I relate

only what occurred during my own career—that of which I was the eye-witness, or circumstances of the truth of which I am as fully convinced as if I had had ocular demonstration of them. What a field then is left for conjecture as to all that passed secretly, or at least unobserved by me; for, of course, my knowledge of facts must be extremely limited. What then must have occurred, and be perpetually occurring, in countries subject to the rule of the Roman Catholic church, in the course of the many centuries that this unholy delusion has been suffered to exist? If noted down, how many pages would be polluted with the sin-stained details!

One of my fellow novices made his public profession at another convent. I knew him well; he was a lad of considerable ability, and was of a good family. The guardian of his convent never took kindly to him. Perhaps, being high spirited, and gifted with superior capacity, he might be a little troublesome to manage, or the guardian might even dislike him from envy, seeing that he made great progress in his studies, and that it was not impossible he might one day rise to dignity and honour in the order. I shall have occasion to show hereafter that it is not a rare case for the oldest brother to become jealous even of the youngest members of the fraternity, if he finds them likely to outshine himself in in-

tellectual acquirements. Such is the world, and the friars, it must be remembered, form part of the world.

The poor youth enjoyed no peace, when once the father guardian had conceived a dislike to him. The slightest error subjected him to severe penance; the least oversight or infraction of duty was punished as a crime. I know the character of his tormentor so well, that I have little doubt that he would do all in his power to seduce the youth into the commission of error, for the pleasure of inflicting punishment upon him. The high-minded youth chafed at this infamous treatment. He was not of a temper to bear undeserved rigour and cruelty tamely. Had he been well treated, he would, in all probability, have been most exemplary in his conduct; ill-used as he was, he became fierce, and his principles were gradually perverted. He was quite old enough to be admitted to the studies. Four years had already elapsed since the conclusion of his noviciate. It was his earnest wish to study; nay more, study with him was an actual want of nature. His aspiring mind conceived high ideas of the power conferred by literary attainments; his mental faculties were in a state of excitement, and he became restless, from the great desire he felt to learn. Nothing but deep study could satiate the craving he felt for knowledge; just

as food, both ample and substantial, is required by a robust constitution. This anxious wish was not a momentary impulse; it was a heart-felt necessity of that noble intellect, and had increased with his growth. Genius sparkled in his eyes and beamed in his open countenance, which was remarkable for exquisitely handsome features, in which vigour and gentleness happily blended. Seeing that the customary time was suffered to pass by without his being allowed to participate in the regular routine of study, he earnestly requested of the father guardian that he might be allowed to enter another convent, in order to commence his studies. The guardian reproved him for his presumption, saying that the superiors knew better than he what was right. The young man hung down his head, his soul burned within him, with anger but he was silent. Some little time passed by; his insatiable thirst for knowledge increased in proportion to the obstacles put in his way. He renewed his request with more warmth than before, and again he was refused. This refusal was harder to bear than the first; his character had somewhat matured in the interval, and the malignity of the denial was more apparent, and, consequently, more deeply felt. But he did not abandon his design. Seeing that he could not attain his object through the guardian, he deter-

mined to write at once to the provincial, who is the clerical authority of the province and has the direction of everything belonging to the convents. It is the privilege of a monk to be allowed, in any case whatever, to write to the clerical superiors of the province, if he has any cause to complain of his own superiors. This permission would be a great boon, and, perhaps, of itself sufficient to ameliorate the condition of conventual life, if the superiors were actuated by justice and impartiality in the administration of their functions; but such is rarely the case. The upright ones are left in obscurity, despised, neglected, and overlooked; whilst the intriguing and ambitious succeed in pushing their way, and keeping the humble in the back ground. Thus it is no common case for the superiors of the province to take the part of applicants against the local superiors, and see justice done them; nor did our poor illused novice meet with any success in that quarter. The guardian was his enemy; as a natural consequence, the provincial, and those composing the clerical council, were his enemies too; and this the issue showed but too plainly. He received a formal refusal, in answer to his request that he might be allowed to commence his studies. Although he could claim the right to be instructed, it was decreed that he must remain in ignorance. Thus his

hopes were frustrated again. One way was open still: he might write to the general of the religious order in Rome. He availed himself of this liberty and wrote. His letter was couched in most humble language. He said that he could not commence his studies in his own province, as his superiors found so many deficiencies in him that they made that prohibition by way of punishment. He therefore implored the general to grant him permission to go to another province, where, by greater watchfulness over himself and by more exemplary conduct, he might merit the good-will of the superiors, and finally obtain the boon which was the object of his fondest desires.

He wrote most humbly, taking all the blame upon himself, and promising repentance and amendment for the future. The general granted him the permission he sought, but upon condition that the provincial of the convent which he desired to enter should give him, in writing, the promise that he would receive him. The youth wrote; the answer that he was accepted came, and even graciously worded. The style was, at least, as courteous as that which the friars ever adopt towards their inferiors; their adulatory phrases are reserved for their benefactors, who, deluded by their flattery, are induced to give freely in support of their institutions. He now

thought that the victory was his. His heart beat joyfully. He wrote directly to Rome, and sent the provincial the writ of acceptance. Perhaps, in the exultation of the moment, he spoke too freely, and allowed the guardian to perceive his triumph. Upon this, probably the guardian wrote to Rome; or, it is even possible, that in the mean time he had been requested from Rome to give them information about the youth; or, there may have been some other cause,—for who can fathom the dark counsels of the monks? At all events, the general changed his mind, and now became as adverse to the youth as he had previously been favourable. He sent him a harsh letter, intimating that he must remain where he was, nor presume again to annoy the superiors with importunate and unreasonable requests.

The anger that was kindled in the breast of the aspiring clerk is undescribable. "These," cried he, "then, are the holy men professing to be guided by mercy and charity; who pretend to be so meek that they give themselves voluntarily as a sacrifice for the expiation of the sins of the world,—victims for others to appease the wrath of God towards sinful man. To deprecate His anger they pretend to devote themselves to meditation, penitence, and prayer; but in reality they hate and persecute their fellow-men. Like

the tyrants of the earth, they trample underfoot the rights of those who have not the power to resist their will. No promise is sacred to them; they violate their word without any hesitation. This father guardian, for no reason at all, will rob me of the opportunity of obtaining distinction,—will, if possible, annihilate my intellectual powers, that he may enjoy the cruel satisfaction of seeing me abased and dishonoured. Look at that general, a pillar of the church, destined soon to become a cardinal, perhaps; he forgets the inviolability of his pledged word; he grants and then he denies with threats what he has previously granted, like a real despot as he is. He is a general of an infamous order. Yes, they are all infamous; these whited sepulchres, these hypocrites, who, judged by the cut of their dress, the austerity of their manners, their shaven crowns, their pretended humility, poverty, and penitence, are esteemed as saints, while in reality they are cruel, rapacious, extortionate, blood-thirsty tyrants. Eternal hatred, irreconcileable hatred to them be my motto!"

The general was held in great reputation for sanctity, and this made it the harder that the youth should be deprived, through his influence, of the opportunity of pursuing his studies. The clerk, who is excluded from the routine of convent education, is considered dishonoured for life.

Breathing out vengeance and execration against the friars, the youth left the convent unperceived and set off for Rome, with the full intention of calling the general to account for his conduct. His journey was long and wearisome. Money he had none; but, as a friar, he was entertained and lodged wherever he chose to enter. He arrived at the eternal city, but he had no eyes for monuments, palaces, or churches. One sole thought filled his mind, one thing only interested him. His grand object was to get an audience of the general. He determined to make him listen to reason, either by gentle means or by force. He felt himself strong in the justice of his cause, superior to all, even to the general himself. He was quite resolved to encounter all, and boldly brave the effects of his daring. He presented himself at the convent, where the general resided, and was admitted to his apartments, which presented a double aspect. He found himself partly surrounded by the luxury of a prelate, and partly by the simplicity becoming a friar's cell. The position of the general seemed to be rather of an amphibious kind: he was not quite immersed in the delicacies of a prelate's life, nor did he seem to be suffering too much from claustral privations. Under shelter of the monk's hood, he enjoyed the luxuries and refinements appertain-

ing to the prelacy, and at the same time paraded the rigid abstemiousness of a friar's life:—a prelate by taste, a monk by hypocrisy.

The youth was announced to the general and received by him. Firmly resolved though he was, he well knew that he should fail in his purpose if his external bearing corresponded with his mental determination. However just and well-founded his complaints might be, he was aware that he should be treated as a rebel if his confidence were manifest. Were he to claim justice boldly, justice, he well knew, would not be rendered to him: if he accused his superiors, instead of taking the blame on himself, he would be sharply rebuked and hastily dismissed for his presumption; or rather, instead of being dismissed, he would be detained and imprisoned. Indeed, he was aware that this danger threatened him, even in presenting himself with all possible meekness. Wishing to act with prudence, he made the greatest effort to restrain his feelings. Like a good friar, he presented himself before the general, with his eyes fixed on the ground, with bended knee, and gentle voice. But, with all of his assumed humility, a certain degree of natural dignity betrayed itself, probably little pleasing to the general, accustomed to the most abject prostration, mental and physical, of even superior monks. The youth before him was but

a miserable clerk. He looked at him for a moment with a frown, and then asked, in an imperious tone, "who are you?" "Brother R——, from P.," he replied submissively. "How is it you are here?" "I came to entreat you, most reverend father, to listen benignly to my request, that I may go and begin my studies,—the privilege is denied me by the superiors of my own convent." "Where is your writ of permission to come here?" "I have none," replied the guilty youth. "How is it that you are without?" said the general in an altered tone. "Have you lost it?" "No, most reverend father; I came here without permission; for if I had asked I should have been refused; I should have had to do penance, and perhaps should never have had the opportunity to come and ask the favour of you, most reverend father." He had made an enormous effort to answer submissively, and had succeeded. He had given no cause for anger; he had shown no vestige of temerity, he had not even uttered one imprudent word. The general, without manifesting anger, merely lifted up his fore finger, like a St. Paul, and said in an authoritative tone, "Go to prison; this is the only answer you deserve." The unfortunate youth, on hearing these terrible words, was almost maddened by rage. He felt seized with sudden giddiness; his ears tingled, his eyes

lost the power of vision, and burned like glowing coals; his whole frame shook, his hands were fevered with excitement. Stretching out his arm perpendicularly over his head, and clenching his fist, he dealt a blow at the head of the general, which extended him senseless on the ground. Certainly at no period of his life, either as novice, clerk, or monk, had this clerical functionary received such a salute—it was truly a blow worthy of a general.

His myrmidons, the lay-brethren and friars, quickly assembled, too late to save him from the attack, but in time to throw themselves upon the impious perpetrator of the deed, who, *suadente diabulo,* had committed a crime unheard of in the annals of the order of St. Francis. *Quod non accidit in anno, accidit in puncto.* The most reverend father general experienced the truth of this adage, even in a more extended sense; *quod non accidit in* SÆCULIS, *accidit in puncto:* and, perhaps, for the first time, *nil sub sole novum* proved false; for it was certainly "something new" that a father general should lie stretched upon the ground by a blow dealt by the hand of a monk. But the clerk had to suffer a heavy penalty. He was sent to prison, where he remained for more than a year. Through the influence of his family and some powerful friends he was at length liberated; and, obtaining a passport

under an assumed name, he went to France. I hope, most sincerely, that he has avoided vicious paths, and that his eyes have been opened to the light of truth. Should he, however, have been lost in the maze of infidelity, the guardian will, I am sure, be accountable to God. Perhaps these pages may meet his eye. If it be so, it will afford him pleasure to see that justice has been done him by a monk of his own province, and he may, perhaps, recollect the narrator, and feel inclined to favour him with an account of his after career.

Whilst my companions, the clerks, who had also, most of them, been my associates in the noviciate, were, one after the other, experiencing such sad misfortunes, my feelings were daily becoming more embittered, in proportion as I became more and more undeceived. Yet I was steadfastly resolved that however disastrously my illusions might be dispelled, I would ever, as far as was compatible with circumstances, act as became an upright and conscientious man. Instead of allowing myself to be corrupted by vicious examples, I determined to flee from them, and take as models the few virtuous monks with whom I was acquainted. I thank God, most gratefully, that I can now lift up my voice, and reveal the truth to the world, nor fear the base devices of calumny. He whose life has been

pure and without blemish need not dread that slander will cast a shadow upon it, however powerful human malevolence may be. Nor do I here repeat this solemn declaration of the purity of my monastic life from the presumptuous desire to appear holier than others. Not like the Pharisee would I thank God that I am not as other men. I am fully conscious that if I was permitted to escape the contaminations which polluted my fellow monks, I was indebted to the grace of God, which made me to differ. My desire is simply to obtain credence for these revelations, by making them known under a name which is proof against calumny and evil report.

About this time an event occurred which became the theme of conversation throughout the convents of Italy, and was the cause of no little excitement.

The father guardian of the convent of S—— was publicly reproved and punished by the provincial. This was, indeed, a rare case, and most naturally excited a great deal of curiosity. That saint-like hypocrite, that arch-dissembler among dissemblers, whose head was ever bowed with apparent humility, had really excited against himself a storm of indignation. It seemed to defy belief that he, so strict in inflicting punishment for the slightest error, should

himself have committed so great a fault as to arouse the anger of the provincial. However strange, however incredible, such was the case; it was no mere empty rumour. This transaction shed for me a still broader light on the tortuous ways of the Catholic priesthood, and it is my desire that it should have the same effect upon the minds of my readers. The case really rests upon a solid foundation, *crescit eundo*, and it will prepare the way for future disclosures.

A Capuchin from a convent in Holland came to Italy to seek hospitality in the convents of his own order. I believe the reason of his thus changing his country was a political one. He was received in the Italian convents, and led the life of a friar there. Disinterested hospitality is not among the virtues practised in convents. A welcome is given only when an advantage can be reaped in return. When expense or loss would be incurred, the duties of hospitality are offered charily, and performed constrainedly. The convent could look for no advantage from the acquisition of this new member. Though he was received, therefore, he was far from being an acceptable guest. Had he been young, he might have gone to distant places across the mountains to say mass in the churches, and thus bringing home rich alms, he would have been considered some use. He might also have been active in the

performance of other duties; but at his age, and in his state of health, it was impossible. The poor man was little more than an inert mass: he was past the age of sixty, enormously corpulent, and afflicted by various distempers. His legs were in so diseased a condition that they could scarcely support the weight of his frame. Nothing useful could be made of this decrepit friar; he was considered a nuisance and he was ill-treated accordingly. Yet this unwieldy and uncouth form was the tabernacle of a gentle soul and an enlightened mind. He was virtuous, devout, and learned; his conversation was pleasing and instructive; and his feelings were generous and elevated. His appearance certainly did not belie the reputation of kindness and benevolence so generally attributed to the Flemish, who are remarkable for benignity of countenance, and simplicity of life, and are the most unostentatious people among civilized and enlightened nations. He was a genuine Dutchman. All this availed him little. He could do nothing for the convent beyond saying mass sometimes in adjacent places, where the emolument was trifling: he was a burden and nothing more. Were even the angel Gabriel to re-appear, he would be lightly esteemed, if he presented himself under an appearance so unimposing. These sentiments, if not expressed, were felt and acted upon. He was in

the convent during my noviciate, and it really was pitiable to observe the torments inflicted upon him by the guardian. I made no comment upon it, at the time, though my heart was moved with compassion. All was going on smoothly with me then; the comment occurred to me later. The doctors had ordered him to wear stockings to cover his diseased legs; but their commands were disregarded by the authorities, and he was obliged, in consequence, to bear additional suffering, during the cold of winter, in his sore and swollen limbs. He bore the most excruciating torments, without venturing to complain, but heavy were the old man's sighs. The obligation to rise at midnight for the choir service was more than he could accomplish. I believe that he had never been accustomed to it, for this duty is by no means universal either in Italy or in other countries. Certainly, if he was not used to it before, it it was too much to expect that he could commence it then. The superiors insisted upon his being present. Sometimes the wretched victim failed to rise, for he actually could not leave his bed; then punishment awaited him; he was deprived of his wine, or had to dine from off the floor on bread and water. He bore the punishments, if not entirely with resignation, at least with dignified composure. If he did not thank

his tormentors, with monkish humility, he at least manifested no signs of anger; and if he failed to say "I deserve it," he very frequently uttered the single word "patience" in a tone expressive of the sublimest of human virtues—the forgiveness of our oppressors. I was deeply affected by his suffering condition, yet I never felt in the slightest degree tempted to charge the severe guardian with cruelty. I was firmly persuaded that he only followed his mission—the mission of a tormentor, and that he had received such mission from God. I thought that he could not, without committing a grievous sin, abate anything from the rigour of his conduct, however repugnant to his natural feelings austerity might be. Such were my opinions on the subject, and, with these impressions, I was certainly on the high road to become involuntarily a religious fanatic. To what degradation might I not have sunk, if God, in His divine mercy, had not enlightened my heart by His grace. Perhaps the most cruel inquisitor, who commits the most outrageous acts of ferocity, was, by nature, endowed with a disposition as mild as mine. How grievous is it to see so large a number of idolaters, prostrating themselves in the name of God, as votaries of a religion which enjoins upon its followers, the shedding of the blood of the just and the innocent! Throughout this narrative,

instead of censuring and exposing persons, who for the most part are but automata entrusted with murderous weapons, I desire to keep in view the exposure of systems and institutions, in themselves more than sufficient to pervert and infuse malevolence into the gentlest disposition.

About this time, reports of the cruelty of the guardian began to circulate, and the affair soon assumed a more decided aspect. The guardian was really not only reproved, but punished by the provincial; and it was the Dutch friar who drew down upon him this disaster. The friar had been again accused of his old fault—non-attendance in the choir. Upon our assembling in the refectory he was rebuked more sharply than usual by the guardian, a young man of thirty, strong and healthy, and a most unbecoming spectacle he presented, reproving this poor sickly old man. He caused the refectory to resound with the sternest words of censure and disgraceful terms of reproach. These invectives were followed by still severer punishment. The friar, learned, pious, and infirm as he was, was put on bread and water for the day. His enfeebled frame, laden with years and indisposition, which required nourishing food, was subject to humiliation and punishment. He submitted as usual, without showing any indignation; but as soon as the punishment was

over, and he was at liberty, he wrote to the provincial, complaining of the harsh manner in which he was habitually treated by the guardian, for a fault, which, however serious it might be in others, was excusable in him; and he supplicated that his grey hairs might be spared such undeserved humiliation.

The provincial was touched by the enormity of the case. He felt how shameful the conduct of the guardian had been, and resolved to make reparation to the old man. He accordingly lost no time in setting out for the convent. There he ordered the porter, to whom he announced himself, to keep his arrival a secret, and retired to a private apartment.

It is the hour for assembling in the refectory. Grace has been said, and dinner has just commenced, when suddenly the door opens and the provincial stands before them. His aspect showed that important matters occasioned his unexpected visit. It was very evident, from his looks, that serious affairs were about to be discussed. So stern and awe-inspiring was his mien, he seemed like Jupiter about to hurl his thunder-bolts from the Olympian Mount. He took his stand in the middle of the refectory: the friars ceased eating, and a sudden pause ensued. All eyes were turned upon him wonderingly. The guardian looked uneasy. The birds of the air and the

beasts of the field have a presentiment of the approaching storm. At such a time they are restless; they flutter, they cry, they howl, according to their several species, and, if possible, retire to a place of safety. The guardian certainly felt the gathering tempest that was ready to burst over his head. He trembled, but, less fortunate than the brute creation, had no place to which he could fly for shelter: the most miserable crevice would at that moment have been welcome to him.

"Father guardian," at length thundered forth the provincial, in tones that found an echo in every breast. The guardian approached with slow step and inclined head. He presented himself on his knees, deadly pale, before the superior. For a moment the provincial eyed him with a look of indignation, then, after enjoying, for a brief space, the confusion of the abashed monk, he said, in a commanding tone, "confess your fault, there is no way of escape." Tremblingly, but distinctly, he replied, "I confess my fault." The poor novices are obliged to particularize their faults; but in the case of the friars, a general confession is allowed to suffice.

Whenever reproof is administered in the refectory, the reprover assumes an air of austerity, and the strongest expressions are unsparingly

made use of. The provincial was, on solemn occasions, inclined to be prolix and make copious speeches. In reply to the guardian's confession, he began:—"Daring young man! You, who ought to bow down to the ground, with respect and fear, before the wisdom of age, have had the assurance, without the least regard to advanced years, without the least pity for suffering, to abuse the authority entrusted to you, by exercising cruelty towards this monk. You have been bold enough to punish a man who deserves regard, by inflicting penance upon him for a fault, which, considering the circumstances, is no fault in him, but which you, in your perverseness, have chosen to consider a crime. To satisfy your own ill-will, you have transgressed the rules which limit your office as guardian, and have barbarously and mercilessly treated an inoffensive old man. You have behaved most wickedly, and your conduct is the more blameworthy, because, under the mask of religious zeal, you have gratified your pride, by exercising the authority, of which you are so unworthy, against one whose age, virtues, and sufferings, ought to inspire you with deference and compassion. For the satisfaction of your own carnal passions, and for the gratification of your own perverse will, you have been guilty of all this cruelty, and you merit a heavy punish-

ment; but I will, in this instance, be merciful, in consideration of the humiliation you experience, in being thus publicly reproved, and will only inflict upon you the punishment of bread and water." The provincial here concluded and took his departure. The guardian appeared completely confounded. He submitted to the punishment, which, it should be understood, always includes eating from the floor, and the administration of the discipline.

After this occurrence, the condition of the poor Dutch friar was, for a time, somewhat ameliorated. He was less strictly watched and punished. The guardian did not dare to vex and molest him as before, and sometimes he was allowed to enjoy his sleep uninterruptedly. But this state of tranquillity was not of long duration. The provincials are changed every three years. The period of office of the one who had punished our guardian expired, and another provincial was appointed. The Dutch friar also soon left the convent; for, according to the rules of the Capuchin order, the fathers do not long remain on one spot, and continual changes are taking place. The affair, then, was gradually forgotten, and the poor old man again became the object of persecution and punishment. His condition was even worse than it had ever been; his life became a complete burden to

him, and he was desirous to quit Italy. After writing in vain to the general and the episcopal and regular congregation, he addressed a fervent petition to the secretary of state that he might be allowed to return to his own country; but the permission was refused. Rome turns a deaf ear to the prayer of the afflicted; her heart is hardened against the cries of suffering; she gloats over the miseries of men. Rome is only indulgent and forbearing towards her satellites; those who, by the sword and stratagem, assist her, stand forth as her champions, and defend her; so that she may, with impunity, practise all sorts of iniquity. Rome is the servant of princes, and, in return, princes protect her by their powerful arm. She is the Babylon that commits adultery with the kings of the earth. She dissimulates. She approves vice in them, and exalts iniquity. She authorises it by decrees given forth from the sanctuary, where her holy spirit breathes forth and confers the holiness of Rome!

Having received a denial from Rome, the monk applied to his ambassador, and, exposing the facts of his case, besought him to procure permission for him to return to his own country. The ambassador was touched by the miserable condition of the friar, and took the affair into his own hands. It assumed a diplomatic aspect,

and consent was obtained. The ambassador himself was returning to Holland, the friar accompanied him, and so ended the affair.

THE STUDIES.

More than three years had elapsed during my noviciate and the subsequent period of profession, and now came the time destined for study. It is a barbarous institution which chains down youth to inertness at that important period of life, when the mind is about attaining sufficient maturity to be able to decide definitely upon the course it should take; when it is in the highest degree plastic; when the physical development is at its culminating point, and the moral and intellectual faculties are proportionably perfected;—at the age when, with fervent aspirations and elevated desires, free men are preparing, with warm affections, ardent hopes, and strong confidence in themselves, to execute great undertakings, and achieve memorable deeds. At that important period of their lives, the youths in convents are kept in total mental inactivity, forbidden to think or to study. The best years are thus lost; the years most adapted to the exercise of the mental and physical powers. That period which furnishes an impulse strong and powerful for the remaining years of life, is frittered away in occu-

pations of the most contemptible kind. The culture of the understanding, the embellishment of the mind, are prohibited, and all this under the pretext of making men holy!

For the last three years I had learned nothing new, with the exception of superstitions of various sorts; nay, I had even forgotten much of what I knew before I entered the convent. The studies which I had abandoned, on leaving my home, had made so slight an impression on my mind as to be easily effaced. At length, after the lapse of a period more than sufficient to blunt and deaden the best intellectual faculties, I was admitted to the study of philosophy. For this purpose I left my convent and went into that of G——, where I was to share the instructions of a professor with eight companions, some of whom I already knew. The studies cultivated are a tissue of sophisms, subtilties, mental aberrations, and impiety, combined with very little that is truthful or useful. After a brief exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity and Incarnation, the studies next pursued are based upon treatises the most extraordinary that can be imagined, in which the creature is deified, and the majesty of the Creator is lowered. It is true that, at first, a course of philosophy is gone through, but the course is at once fantastic, superficial, and ridiculous. The study of gene-

ral literature is never thought of; history and the belles-lettres are altogether neglected; and that study, which above all others is calculated to elevate the mind, and strengthen the reflective powers—the study of mathematics—receives no attention whatever. In short, every study adapted to make a man respected and useful in society, is entirely set aside. The Aristotelian theory is inculcated, with all its monstrous absurdities; and these foolish disquisitions form the only branch of learning which is attended to, after three of the best years of the student's life have been suffered to pass by in total inactivity. But I will confine myself to actualities, leaving it to others to speculate on the usefulness of the system, which makes knowledge rest on sophisms; where religion is built on extravagancies and the grossest impiety; and where the study of real wisdom—the wisdom of the Bible—is utterly neglected.

It must not be imagined that the teacher is always competent for his undertaking. There is but one professor to conduct the scholar through all the various branches of knowledge. If the professor were himself a man of learning, he could, at least in part, supply the deficiency of the plan of education; and even, if he did not succeed in making great scholars, he might instruct and lead the youths under his care to a

certain degree of proficiency, and enable them to become tolerably well informed. But this is seldom the case. The professors are rarely men of learning, and sometimes are most ignorant. The candidate for the professorship is examined by two professors and by the chapter, consisting of the provincial and the definitors. Generally the two professors are ignorant men—men not likely to elect a companion wiser than themselves. The examiners give their votes very frequently from motives of private friendship, altogether regardless of merit, and thus the most unsuitable persons are often chosen. Frequently a monk, who wishes to become professor, tries by flattery and every possible artifice to obtain the votes of the examiners. He will often have recourse to the meanest stratagems to reach the goal he has in view, and succeed altogether independently of his fitness for the post. Sometimes the aspirant is informed beforehand of the questions and arguments on which he will be examined, when of course he has the opportunity of preparing, at his leisure, for the trial. Under such an impostor, the poor youths have to study, while the really well-informed men are neglected. A man of learning, conscious of his own dignity, does not stoop to flattery, he cannot so abase himself; thus he is passed over, and the ignorant, unscrupulous man, is preferred

before him. The professors are held in high esteem by the other monks, and are soon promoted to higher honours. The professorship is the first step to the prelacy. The professor may become definitor, provincial, general, but all these officers must first have been professors. The monks, as I have already proved, are not exempt from human weaknesses, but share them in common with their brethren beyond the convent walls. They are therefore covetous of honours, and the ruling study of the professor is to obtain promotion. He cares but little for the improvement of his class. What can it matter to him whether they know a little more or a little less of the absurd medley of theological subtleties in which the doctrine of Rome consists? Among the youths committed to his care, there are, of course, many of great natural talents, and it excites indignation to think of these being retarded in their progress by the ignorance or indolence of the professor.

Whatever may be the accomplishment of a teacher, unless he takes a lively interest in the progress of his pupil, he will communicate his instructions with very little effect. When he ceases to regard it as a noble occupation to enlighten the understanding of the young, his employment sinks to a mere drudgery, and is performed with little credit to master or scholar.

As we have already seen, the convent professor is, in most cases, devoid of the knowledge requisite for his vocation, and of the interest required to ensure the advancement of his pupils. Such was the master under whom I had the misfortune to commence my studies. He was of unfortunately plain and unprepossessing appearance. He was, too, both hard-hearted and haughty, and his attainments were most despicable. His skin was brown, greatly resembling leather, and his face pitted with the small-pox; he had a large and prominent nose, and a very wide mouth. His eyes were black, and wore an expression of cunning. Certainly a spark of genius seemed to glisten there, so that probably he would have displayed marks of genius had his talents been cultivated. His beard was frightfully frizzly and ugly.* Under the best of circumstances he must have been a plain man, but attired in the uncouth habilament of a friar, he was about as repulsive an object as the eye could rest upon. The plainness of his countenance was rendered more observable by its habitual expression, which placed its physical ugliness in a still stronger light. On account of his extreme uncomeliness he was favoured with the soubriquet of "the Beauty," and this was the appellation by which he was known throughout the province. In addition, his manner was harsh

and imperious, and his voice most tremendously nasal even for a Capuchin, in whose order the defect seems inherent and is most fully developed. I leave this disgusting peculiarity to the consideration of my scientific friends. To trace the effect—the nasal twang of the pious of the order of the beatific St. Francis—to its original cause, would be an investigation worthy of the learned. No doubt it is from constantly listening to each other that this defect is communicated to all. Or perhaps the habit is contracted as a consequence of the restraint of the noviciate. The novice, being compelled to speak in a low and affected tone, and, as it were, keep back his words that they may not sound too loud and bold, the tongue adheres timorously to the palate, and the tone finds an issue half way between the nose and the mouth, thus producing the nasal drawl. Whatever the cause, however, all share in the defect, more or less, the most hypocritical being the most remarkable for nasality of tone.

The most extraordinay characteristic of this plainest of all plain men was his ambition to appear handsome. His desire was in exact proportion to his ugliness. My readers well know that the brotherhood have their heads shaven, with the exception of a circle about three inches in width, where the hair is allowed to grow, and the razor passes beneath

and above this crown. What infinite care did he bestow that this circle might be handsome and regular! I, as the most skilful, was called upon to dress it, and all the time I was so employed he held a small looking glass in his hand, to direct the operations of my fingers. The razor was required to do its work to a nicety, for another immense care was to have the skin of his head as smooth as his hand. The single lock of hair left upon the forehead is an object of great anxiety to the friars; and he who has it in the best order is much envied. The professor was extremely careful that his lock should stand up boldly, and appear to advantage. I had to bestow unlimited pains too upon his frizzly beard. Scissors, combs, pomade, lather, and I know not what beside, were unsparingly employed to beautify it; he wished to have it well trimmed, shining, and nicely crisped, to atone, as far as possible, for the cruelty of nature in denying him the ample flowing beard, which is the great pride of the Capuchin. Such was a specimen of the attention that "the Beauty" lavished upon his outer man, and indeed there was some need for it, though, it is true, that to every one but himself, the result appeared very inadequate to the trouble employed. Little captivating in his outward appearance, his manner towards us was harsh, exacting, and arrogant;

and we all soon began to feel a decided aversion towards him; so that we saw him, or conversed with him, or studied under him most unwillingly. He perceived our aversion, and amply reciprocated it. I was now sufficiently awake to the errors of monkish subtleties to begin to discard many of the scruples which had formerly beset me, so that my feeling of antipathy towards him aroused not in my conscience the fear of perdition, as it would formerly have done; and I persuaded myself that this dislike was a natural, invincible feeling, and far removed from hatred.

The ill-will that he bare towards us was most apparent when the ordination of any of his pupils was spoken of. The age of twenty-five is the period at which the clerks are ordained to say mass; but, by a dispensation from Rome, this privilege can be obtained one, two, or even three years earlier. To our excellent professor it was exceedingly unpleasant that the clerks should commence saying mass, and he always endeavoured to put obstacles in the way of a dispensation being granted to them. In acting thus, he was actuated both by natural unamiability, and an unwillingness to see his authority diminished; for when a clerk is admitted to say mass, he becomes, at once, the companions of the other friars. He is no longer treated as an underling;

either with regard to the discipline, or in any other respect. His lot is henceforward cast with that of the friars. One of the clerks was recommended by the guardian to the provincial, to obtain for him a dispensation of eighteen months. This is a common practice, when there is no demerit on the part of the supplicant, and in this case there was none. The guardian, knowing the character of the professor, took the precaution to support his request by obtaining the signatures of some of the older members of the convent. The provincial complied; he wrote to Rome and obtained the dispensation. The dispensation, with all the papers relating to the clerk, was sent to the professor, who has to communicate the result to the applicant, to prepare everything for the ordination, and hand the papers to the bishop. The approval of the professor is generally requested as a matter of etiquette. But on this occasion the professor refused to take any steps whatever to put the affair into train. To justify his disobedience, and cause the order to be retracted, he himself wrote to the provincial. This letter must have contained gross slander, to judge from the issue. Apparently, he charged the young man with lukewarmness and neglect of religious observances, and irregularities of various kinds. But the provincial did not listen to him, as we learned

in a very extraordinary manner. We were quite in ignorance as to the provincial having applied for the dispensation, and, consequently, of every circumstance connected with the affair, when, one day, the youth in question was ordered by the professor to come to his room to get some paper bags filled with flower seeds, to be sown in our garden. The professor looked at the bags, distributed the seeds, and inspected the work. In making up the parcels of seeds, the professor had taken a piece of paper from the floor to use for one of them. The clerk opened the paper, to divide the seeds among us, and in glancing at it casually, observed that it was written upon, and recognized the writing as that of the provincial. He could not resist the temptation of reading it, and, much to his surprise, found there an angry rebuke from the provincial to the professor, for having had the assurance to write such groundless accusations against an unoffending youth. He said that the testimony of all the friars in the convent, collected by the guardian, showed evidently that he was actuated by prejudice alone, in committing so despicable an action. He added that the professor merited punishment for his injustice, but that for that time he would only send him the dispensation from Rome, and order him to arrange matters for the ordination without further delay. The letter

wound up with the following remark; "Remember that he who raised you to your present station, can at any moment degrade you from it."

We were all occupied in the garden, and our companion summoned us, at once, to read the letter. After mature deliberation we agreed to say nothing about it at that time, but to keep the letter, and wait the coming of events. The following day, the professor, who was ignorant of what had happened, called the clerk, and intimated to him that he was to prepare himself for ordination. He insinuated that difficulties had been raised, but that he had smoothed them. The clerk knew too well the real state of the case: without replying, he went away to prepare for the ceremony. He passed through the usual ordeal, and was ordained in the regular manner. On the evening following ordination, it is usual for the newly ordained monk to go to the professor, to thank him for all he has done for him; but this ceremonial the young man omitted. The professor, seeing the form neglected, was exceedingly angry, and the next day summoned the culprit, and the rest of us, to his rooms. As a mark of distinction, the professor has two rooms; none of the other officials, not even excepting the guardian, has more than one. We went to his apartments fully resolved to sustain any attack with firmness, and to show our-

selves as resolute as he, should he manifest anger towards us. We entered, and advanced with an air of confidence. He seemed much surprised to see us thus undaunted, our eyes raised, and our bearing that of manly dignity. His malicious little eyes rolled to and fro, and darted fiery looks of anger and disdain. His conscience told him that we stood opposed to him, and he prepared himself for a struggle. But we too were prepared. At length he began to speak. "Why," said he, turning to the new priest, "why did you not come last night to perform your duty to the professor, and thank him for the obligations you owe to him?" "What obligations, father?" said the young man courageously. "I do not know of any; I beg of you to mention them, that I may acknowledge them." "What impudence!" exclaimed the professor. "Is it not through my endeavours that you have been admitted to ordination?" "On the contrary, father," replied his late pupil, "I was led to think that had it depended upon you, I should not have said mass for a century to come."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed the professor, his eyes darting fire.

"I mean to say," retorted the young man bravely, "that you did not assist me in any way; and more than that, we are acquainted with

your manœuvres with the provincial." "What, what!" cried he, turning pale.

"Yes, and we know too that you had the misfortune to fail in your endeavours, and to be reproved by the provincial."

"How do you know that?" cried the professor, with a truly feline squall.

"We read the letter ourselves."

"What letter?" he asked, trembling from head to foot.

"The letter of the provincial, reproving you for behaving so unjustly towards me."

"Vile wretches! rebels! leave the room directly: you shall pay for this. You dare to open the drawers of your superiors, and ransack their contents, and carry them off! You shall all pay for it, for you are all leagued together—you are all accomplices. Get away with you," he exclaimed, with violent emotion, favouring us with pure chest tones this time, and forgetting, for once, the old nasal whine.

We stood there unabashed and composed, with countenances unmoved, our feet planted firmly on the ground. "Father professor," said I, "I can testify that the letter was not stolen. You yourself gave it to us, though certainly unintentionally. It fell into the hands of our companion. The flower seeds you gave him were wrapt up in it. He remembers having

seen you pick it up from the floor, and we are ready to bear witness that this is the truth."

It would be difficult to say whether the face of "the Beauty" was most expressive of anger, shame, hatred, or scorn. He made me no reply; perhaps he had not the power to do so. The words which he seemed inclined to utter died in his throat. With the majesty of a god, as Homer expresses it, he raised his arm, and pointed with his finger to the door. We, without any valedictory ceremonial, but with a slow and steady pace, took our departure.

Our triumph was complete; we had humbled the professor, who dared not venture to take any steps to punish conduct certainly most unusual in a convent. Had he dared to allude to the subject, it would have been the worse for him. The provincial would no doubt have reproved us, but the professor would have risked finding himself for ever precluded from honours, and his promotion altogether retarded. He was most ambitious to become provincial, and so he allowed it to pass over silently; but from that time he regarded us with the utmost malevolence, and took every opportunity to mortify and persecute us. Whenever he spoke it was in the bitterest tones. But we feared him not; we were now men; we knew the monks, and were acquainted with the deceptions of convent life.

Frequently now our hearts were filled with bitterness, by the reflection that we were tied to a life, which, detestable as it had become to us, must be borne, seeing that we had no means of loosening our abhorred chains. But our studies, absurd though they were, served to occupy our minds; and man, in exercising his intelligence, lifts himself above the trials of life, and becomes, to some extent, indifferent to them. We, as students, experienced that kind of enthusiasm which warms the breast of him who feels the glow of that spirit which was breathed into him by God Himself, when He created man in His own likeness, and gifted him with reason. Mental exercise is calculated to calm the animal spirits, and to soften and tone down the passions. Here we have a proof that if the probationers were allowed to study during the time of the noviciate, instead of remaining in a state of complete mental inactivity, fewer transgressions on the part of the novices would occur; for such transgressions cease when the studies begin; and, if they recommence, it is at a later period, when the studies are abandoned, and the monks are again deprived of their healthy excitement.

I have already remarked, and proved too, most satisfactorily, I think, that the passions, when roused in the bosom of a monk, assume a much more violent form than in other indivi-

duals, on account of the unnatural self-restraint to which he is compelled to submit, and which, as a matter of course, is subject to re-action. This was the case with the hatred our professor had conceived towards us, and his vindictiveness equalled his hatred; it was an abiding feeling, that was truly Satanic in its intensity. As long, however, as the provincial, to whom he had exposed himself, remained in office, his hatred was too impotent to occasion us any concern, beyond the endurance of the petty annoyances, to which he subjected us. But his turn for fuller vengeance came, and severely enough he exercised his power upon us all.

The three years' term of office having expired, our friend, the provincial, was replaced by another. In the order of the Capuchins the offices are elective, and they terminate in the same manner as in a republican government. The superiors are elected by the suffrages of the friars; and after a fixed period, which is rigorously adhered to, they vacate their offices, and others succeed to their posts. If the votes were given honestly, and no unworthy practices were carried on by intriguers, suitable men might be chosen, and the administration might be equitable and advantageous, as far, at least, as is compatible with institutions based upon wrong principles. But, as I have repeatedly shown,

upright men are set aside by the envious, and, in consequence of their modest and unassuming demeanour, are passed over unnoticed, while the hypocrite and the boaster obtrude themselves to posts of honour. As it often happens in civil elections, the dishonest, the ambitious, the flatterer, become the masters; and abuses and disorders of every kind are the result.

The new provincial was not in reality a bad man. His disposition was kind; but advanced age had enfeebled his mind, so that he was completely led by others, and the argument of the last speaker was invariably the one that prevailed with him. He was an erudite man, of pleasing countenance, but his appearance was unimposing: he was low in stature, and had an awkward limp. Upon assuming office, he visited, according to custom, all the convents under his authority, and consequently came to ours. On this occasion we ventured upon a bold step. We were completely tired of the ill-usage of the professor, who, after the removal of the late provincial, had taken no pains to conceal his ill-will towards us. His conduct became every day more fierce and cruel, and we were determined to contrive some means of resenting it, for our lives were rendered wretched by him. We held a secret consultation, and agreed to present a petition, signed by us all,

to the new provincial, on the day that he should come to visit the convent. In this petition we prayed that we might be removed into another convent, and placed under another professor; or that our professor might be removed elsewhere, as he hated us all, and gave us continual proofs of his aversion; nor could we, by any means in our power, soften his antipathy towards us. We petitioned this favour, no less for the tranquillity of our own minds, than for the good of his soul.

The general was struck by the tone of the petition, and he could not help thinking that the professor must really be in fault, if all nine of us unanimously subscribed such a memorial. Other officials, of a different stamp, might have considered this step as an act of rebellion; but this provincial, in the kindliness of his nature, determined to give the case serious attention. He made enquiries, and found that the professor was not only the object of aversion to us, but to all the convent besides. The good man then performed an act of justice, rare among friars. He acceded to our request, and promised that the professor should be removed from the convent. It can easily be imagined how furious the professor would be when he heard what we had done. He was described to us as appearing completely maddened by rage. He went instantly to the apartment of the provincial, and

there he must have exerted his powers of artifice to the utmost, for he obtained from the provincial—good, kind, easy soul that he was!—not only the withdrawal of the decree in our favour, but also *carte blanche* for the exercise of his power over his nine rebellious pupils.

Truly ours seemed now a desperate case! This man, who breathed out vengeance against us, and who, in consequence of our last step, had become still more exasperated, was now quite unfettered in the exercise of his tyranny over us. We were completely in the power of one, who, from the fierceness engendered by hate, and natural perversity of disposition, added to the desire of retaliation, was now bent upon our destruction. Nor could we see any means of escape. Immediately after the provincial had completed his visit, and quitted the convent, the professor began to make two of our number experience the effects of his triumph. These two had been amongst his most bitter opponents, and he now summoned them before him and began to reprove them in the harshest terms, telling them they were unworthy to wear the holy garb, which they had dishonoured by their scandalous insubordination; and he ordered them to go at once to the convent of —— to wash the dishes for an indefinite period of time! The two poor wretches came to

us, with tears in their eyes, and despair in their countenances, to tell us the cruel tale. A cry of indignation burst from us all; for not only did we feel the utmost compassion for the two victims, but we thought that our own turn would soon follow. Anger and terror filled the breast of each, for we had learned, through a lay-brother, that this cruel tyrant was empowered to do us all the harm he wished. Agitated by contending feelings, we took our resolution immediately. We all went together to him, and and all began to speak at once tumultuously. I believe, for a moment he really feared for himself. The anger of so many excited young men must have appeared somewhat terrific in his eyes, so that his flinty heart beat timidly in his breast. He trembled, evidently from fear, rather than anger. We cried, "we have all come to have the same penalty inflicted upon each of us, which has been inflicted upon our two companions. We know that you can do what you please with us, and we ask you to punish us all, as you have punished them. Send us all away into other convents, to be made scullions! we are no better than your two victims: we share in their guilt, and we are all agreed that we will no longer live with you." There was something imposing in this demonstration of noble indignation: we felt lifted

above ourselves at that moment, and were fully impressed with the sense of our own dignity. Certainly the professor was impressed by it too. He could not resist our appeal, and he tore in pieces the hateful paper of condemnation. After this he became a little more rational in his conduct towards us: he was no more indulgent, but he ceased from molesting us causelessly. His conduct was not so changed, however, but that from time to time he indulged in the delight of making us feel his aversion, and he aimed his persecutions more particularly at me, as I am about to show.

But before I proceed to my story, the reader will give me leave to return to a subject which occupied our attention at first—the repentance of the vows by one of the probationers, and the consequent results. I return to it here because it happened during the time that I was studying, and I was not only a witness, but was called upon to take an active part in the occurrence. These memoirs aim at exposing facts, without pretending to the elaborate concatenation of history. Facts are here narrated with the irregularity characteristic of memoirs; but it is my desire to place them in bold relief; and I should be sorry for them to appear as mere exceptions, when they are in reality the exponent of evils which are perpetual, and which can

never cease to be so until the vicious system, of which they are the result, is numbered with the past.

One of the probationers was, for a long period, confined in a convent prison. He had taken the vows blindly, like the generality of the novices, and after having enjoyed rather more liberty than his noviciate allowed him, he felt conflicting passions assail his breast, and the more powerfully the more he considered the tie that bound him to the monastic life. He was not one of those who draw upon themselves severity merely through negligence: he really merited condemnation, by leading a corrupt life. Avarice, sensuality, and pride were his ruling vices. To indulge in these base passions, he broke his vows, he trampled underfoot discipline of every kind: no restraint could curb him. He indulged in every kind of excess, and chastisement failed altogether to intimidate him. Yet but a few short years before he had been among the most yielding and virtuous of the novices, and one of the most zealous in the observance of religious requirements. Now his conduct was such as to endanger open reproach to the convent. He was, therefore, justly taken and committed to prison. There he lay immured for a long time. But at length it was determined to proceed against him judicially, to legalize the

proceedings that had been taken, as well as to make him an example to others. After his imprisonment, therefore, had lasted some time, he underwent an examination, and sentence was pronounced in due form. The professor was to conduct the trial, by the order of the provincial, and as I was secretary to the professor, it devolved upon me to assist at his examination. The trial was conducted with closed doors. The professor took his seat, and a revolting sight he presented in conjunction with the shameless criminal. He wore an air of assumed seriousness, but no sign was manifest from which it might be inferred that this solemn duty was to him other than a pleasant task; indeed he seemed in his very element. Not from love of justice, or zeal for religion, did he seem to lend himself to the work; but from innate taste for the administration of punishment, and from natural ferocity of disposition. I sat in my place, pen in hand, ready to take down the notes of the trial. It was much against my will that I was obliged to fill this post: had it been possible, I would have excused myself, although it was most flattering to my vanity that this distinction should have been shown to me in so delicate an affair, when I was the youngest of the students.

The criminal was led before the judges.

Two lay-brethren acted as jailers, and walked one on each side of him. Their appearance called to mind two of the hired assassins, so generally attached to the train of the petty tyrants of the middle ages, rather than brothers of the order of the seraphic St. Francis. The trade plied by ruffians seemed more naturally their calling than that of saying prayers, and practising works of humility. Their zeal for religion, and the indignation they felt against the culprit, rendered them so cruel, that they seemed actuated by kindred emotions, and it struck me that they appeared scarcely less wicked than he.

The aspect of the criminal was truly expressive of perversity and hatred. The most unbridled passions were stamped in legible characters on his crime-stained countenance. His eyes glowed with the fire of impurity: his lips, even when closed, seemed to express the most terrible imprecations and irreconcilable hatred. His forehead was large and bold; but, far from indicating serenity, wisdom, or virtue, it seemed the index of a mind which was "a troubled sea, casting up mire and dirt." His frame was robust: he held his head erect: his breast heaved, not like that of one who invokes mercy, but rather like one who, though in a state of helpless despair, still, with demoniac pride, resolves to defy justice, both human and divine.

He presented one of the most striking pictures conceivable of haughty defiance, ostentatiously displaying the reckless pride of crime, and glorying in his shame. Irrevocable vows, pronounced unwittingly, had hardened his heart in iniquity, and steeped his soul in abomination.

The judge commenced the examination. The wicked man did not dissemble: he did not attempt to hide his guilt. He neither palliated nor tried to conceal it, nor would he condescend to justify himself in any way. He employed none of that cunning by which an ordinary culprit attempts to explain away, or at least to soften his crime, in order to escape punishment, or obtain a mitigation of it. He boasted of his sins with loathsome effrontery. It seemed as if they afforded him the most delightful subject of contemplation. He appeared delighted to see the judge horrified. To him it was a grateful spectacle to behold us frightened by his horrible and disgusting disclosures. His was the sincerity of the unrepentant and hardened, not of the contrite, sinner.

The judge interrogated, he replied, and I wrote. The examination was short, considering the number of accusations and the enormity of the guilt. The inquiry was at an end; the judge rose to dissolve the sitting; when the criminal signed to him to resume his seat, as he had

something more to say. "Speak," said the judge. The criminal turned to me, saying, "write what I dictate." "Write," repeated the judge. He then began:—"the crimes of which I have been accused to-day are all truly laid to my charge, they are attested by my solemn confession, and are manifest as the light of day; but I have committed many others, only known to myself—not to the convent. I will now reveal them openly. Write down that, besides those for which I have been condemned, I have committed such and such a crime, such and such another;" and here he enumerated an entire series of crimes, which had remained undiscovered, some of them even still more serious than those brought forward against him. I wrote down accurately these horrible details, until the judge exclaimed, with a voice really tremulous from horror, "stop! this ought not to be written down; it forms no matter of accusation; it does not come before the judgment seat of man, but before the judgment seat of God. You are not permitted to be your own accuser. Men cannot judge you for crimes of which they are ignorant, and they do not desire to learn them from yourself." Upon this, the man—if this appellation is applicable to one so degraded—this self-destroyer exclaimed, with a hoarse voice, and satanic expression of countenance, "well, if

you will not write down these accusations which I make against myself, write down what I am now about to say. I wish the friars to expel me from their order, or else I will do my utmost to condemn myself, and them too." My pen almost refused to perform its office; my fingers could scarcely maintain it in their grasp; but I forced myself to continue, and the professor ordering me to go on, I penned words, which need no comment of mine to show the intense abhorrence of this man's mind for the system to which he was bound by iniquitous vows.

The documents were closed, sealed up, and sent to Rome. It seemed that they believed at Rome that the order was contaminated by retaining such a member, and that even the prison was sullied by his presence, for a decree of expulsion was made against him. This man was set free, rewarded as it were, and his desires to forsake the convent life forwarded; whilst a madman, and one who had fled to Rome for protection, remained for years the inmates of a prison, one of them, perhaps, terminating his life there.

The act of expulsion from the convent is a grotesque ceremonial, quite at variance with the maintenance of priestly dignity, and altogether unworthy of the majesty of a religious system.

The whole community is called to the gate by the father guardian. The person to be expelled

is stripped of the monk's frock, and clothed in another garment, which is neither new nor valuable. He is then seized roughly by the shoulders, and pushed towards the gate; at some distance from it he receives a kick from the superior, which causes him to advance in the direction of the gate; then follow the monks, who all, one after the other, perform the same act, until, having received the kick of the last, who stands at the gate, he finds himself without the convent precincts; the gate is closed upon him, and so terminates the ceremony of expulsion and his monkish career.

I now approach the time of my ordination. I was the youngest, and, consequently, the last to be ordained. The dispensation, as I before observed, is frequently granted for eighteen months, rarely for more. When the age of twenty-five is attained, there is no longer need of a dispensation. This law applies, with equal force, to the secular clergy. Occasionally the dispensation is granted for two, or even three years; but this is an extremely rare case. Two years and a half were wanting to the completion of my twenty-fifth year, so that I had not the remotest hope of obtaining a dispensation. But, without my knowledge, the guardian applied for it to the provincial, and he again applied to the procurator general, who is the

clerical counsel for the whole order. This procurator was formerly the provincial, who took our part against the professor, and was, consequently, acquainted with me; and had apparently formed a favourable impression of me, for he procured the dispensation, nowithstanding the deficiency in my age. The papers were, as usual, forwarded to the professor; and he, as he had done before in a similar case, wrote to the provincial to prevent my ordination. The good lame man was still in office; but on this occasion he did not allow himself to be imposed upon. Perhaps the temper of the professor was better known to him now, for he paid no heed to the opposition, and decreed my ordination. But the professor was not yet satisfied. He insisted still, and wrote to the procurator-general, unmindful of the humiliation he had once experienced at his hands, under similar circumstances. His blind prejudice towards me turned against himself: the mortification he had before endured was repeated. The provincial, by order of the procurator, instead of listening to his accusations, sent him the notice of my ordination, accompanied by the following formula:—"I command you, by the holy obedience you owe to your order, (this form is the most solemn that can be employed, and disregard of it is considered the most serious crime,) to consign to brother G——, of

C——, all the papers belonging to him." I then received orders to go to G—— to be ordained, which was most gratifying to me, as this order was given to meet the wishes of the bishop of that place. I felt really honoured by his protection; for he was a kind and sincere man, affable and obliging to all, and so popular, that in those days of political agitation, when other bishops had to leave their dioceses, and seek refuge elsewhere, he remained in his unmolested. I was his favourite among the friars. His affection for me dated from the time when, on occasion of an examination, I was chosen to make a speech on philosophy. I acquitted myself so much to his satisfaction that he conceived a favourable opinion of me, and declared that he would ordain me himself. Subsequently I went to another convent to study theology, and many years elapsed; but he did not forget his promise; and he now requested the favour of the provincial, who readily granted it. It was not from favour or recommendation that I stood so high with him; but, I have reason to think, simply from his conceiving a high regard for my sincerity and attainments.

According to the canonical law I ought to have been ordained in the diocese where I resided; but this obstacle was removed by my being received as a member of the convent of

G——. So I took my departure. The professor gave me my papers, throwing them down disdainfully before me; but refused to give me his hand to kiss, as is customary on such occasions.

Upon arriving at G——, I presented myself to the bishop, who sent me into the convent to perform certain religious ceremonies. The friars thronged around me, welcoming me amidst uproarious laughter. To them I appeared in the light of a victorious hero, having just come off triumphant in my contest with my strong enemy. The story of my opponent's efforts against me, and complete failure, had become generally known, and all rejoiced in his discomfiture; so beloved was he!

After being ordained, I could have stayed, and, indeed, ought to have remained in my new convent, as it was considered that I now belonged to it; but I could not bring my mind to leave my old companions, and was desirous to return, even with the professor there as my declared enemy. I consequently exerted myself to the utmost to obtain the required permission. The provincial demurred for some time, but finally I succeeded in gaining my point, and went back. The professor treated me henceforward, if not with affection, at least with civility. Perhaps his heart was softened by my willingness to return and be again under him. Perhaps

too he felt that it was necessary to abate somewhat of his harshness now that we were all priests, and could, therefore, with more vigour resist his ill-treatment.

THE CATASTROPHE.

Eight years had already passed away since I left my native place. The wish to see my home again, to see my mother once more, manifested itself—somewhat late, it is true, but not so late as the reader may be induced to think, from my silence hitherto with respect to this subject. I delayed it in order that I might be able to narrate the sad events, connected with this natural desire, in an uninterrupted chain, which I am now prepared to do.

Oh, that my dear mother could now derive satisfaction from this tribute of affection paid to her memory by her sorrowing son! But I must not anticipate. From the moment that my veneration for the monks began to cool, and when I saw my companions pining away with longing desires to see their parents, then arose within me the desire to see my mother. I began to reflect with pain upon my conduct towards her, while we were still together. Too well I now recollected that, instead of endeavouring to mitigate her sorrow, I had increased it, by my cruel indifference. Now a thousand tender reminiscences

thronged on my mind, and I remembered how gentle, how affectionate, how patient she had ever been to me. The tie which bound her to her only child had been severed by cruel fanaticism, ere he was at an age to reflect. Since that fatal moment we had never met. How ardent must have been the desire of this lone heart to press to her bosom her absent son. So intense was this unfulfilled craving, that it gradually consumed her vital strength.

Her letters to me were most affectionate; my answers, if not quite so warm, were not wanting in tenderness. In carrying on our correspondence, of necessity our letters were left open, that the overflowings of a maternal heart, and the affectionate expressions of filial tenderness, might be subjected to the examination of those, who, so far from sympathising with them, looked upon them as profane. They were read and commented upon by unfeeling friars, by the professor, and sometimes by the father guardian. One day I received a letter from her, unusually desponding and touching. In the preceding ones she had often pressed me to try to obtain permission to come and see her, and I had in mine given her some faint hope that the superior would perhaps be indulgent, and grant me the favour. I wrote in this strain to comfort her, though I had but little hope that the superiors would

grant my request; for I had already before my eyes some examples of the obduracy of the monks, in refusing such permission to others. Now her last letter was written in so melancholy a strain, breathing an air of such utter desolation, and complaining so bitterly of her hardship in being deprived of the sight of her only child, who ought to be the solace of her life, that it seemed impossible even the flinty heart of a monk could resist so affecting an appeal. She made a mysteriously solemn call, expressing the most fervent desire to see me ere she died, and saying that she felt that her death was at hand. Perhaps God, as an earnest of that light which is soon to burst in eternal streams on the sight of the just, in His divine presence, sends this glimmer of consciousness to His loved ones before their departure hence. Or it may be that the soul, anticipating the early dissolution of its earthly tabernacle, and impatient of the ties which bind it still to earth, wings its flight, in anticipation, towards the purer regions of heaven, destined to be its resting-place to all eternity. I believed steadfastly, ere long, that God had given this presentiment to my mother, as a proof that He had chosen her as the peculiar object of His love and tenderness, that she might know no fear in passing from this lower world to take her station among beatified spirits in the realms

of light. She added, that the moment of her dissolution being near—yet she was not ill apparently at this time—she would cause a petition to be drawn up, addressed to the general of the order, that he would listen to the anxious request of a mother, who asked permission to see her child once more. I was almost beside myself at the perusal of this letter: affection, sorrow, ardent desire to see her again, all combined to produce sensations well nigh overwhelming, and I seconded her request by supplicating the general myself. My petition had to pass through the hands of the professor, who advised me not to send it, strongly opposing himself to my resolution; but I was immoveable. I had reason to know afterwards that, having been unsuccessful in dissuading me from my purpose, he employed secret machinations, as did also the father guardian, in order to frustrate my wishes; the former, as usual, from natural ferocity, the latter, from the fear that should I go home, the entreaties of my mother might prevail with me, and induce me to write to Rome to demand my secularization. In my case it would not have been difficult to obtain secularization; for here was a widowed mother, standing in need of the comfort and assistance of her only son. This probability, therefore, was sufficient to induce the guardian to oppose my

desires, as he did not wish to lose me. The reply of the general was harsh even to cruelty. He said he was quite shocked at my conduct, which was quite unbecoming in a holy friar, who ought to despoil himself of the affections of this sinful world. To love one's father and mother, he said, was altogether carnal! Is it not one of the commandments of God? Did not Christ himself love his mother? But this man was a Catholic, and he endeavoured to strengthen his argument by a perverse application of a passage of the gospel. *Relinque mortuos sepelire mortuos suos!* He concluded by ordering me to write to my mother, and tell her frankly that all farther application would be useless, as I should never be allowed to go home before my studies were ended. I was a monk; obedience was imperative; my heart was bleeding, but I wrote to this effect. I felt the strongest tendency to hate the general, the friars, and everything connected with the convent; but I restrained my feelings, for I knew that it was not right to give way to such emotions.

My letter was twelve days ere it reached its destination, and the answer was subjected to the same delay, so that I had to wait nearly a month before I received it. But at length a despatch reached me not in my mother's writing, but in that of my cousin, sealed with black! At sight

of it I was seized with a violent trembling, and I felt my heart oppressed as if an iron hand had grasped it. Twice I tried to open the letter, and twice my hand refused its office, falling down powerless by my side. A third effort and I succeeded. I opened it; but before I could read I closed my eyes, for I was seized with giddiness; my head swam, and everything turned round with me. At length I commenced,—my eyes fell upon the writing—what a terrible beginning:—*Ora, fac ut orent, pro tua matre, patres.* What need to read further? All was expressed in this dreadful line: too well I knew my mother was dead. I could see no more: a thick mist covered my eyes; an icy coldness fell upon my heart; it seemed as if pulsation was arrested. For a moment I stood as one transfixed; then a wild shriek burst from my breast; it was the cry of despair: a fearful temptation assailed me; a frenzied delirium took possession of me—the delirium that tempted to self-destruction. In reflecting upon the violent emotions which agitated my mind at that moment, and what I then suffered, I am moved by feelings of gratitude to that superintending power which preserved me from suicide in an extremity when my mental faculties were overpowered, and I was upon the very verge of insanity. I rushed from the spot to my cell, where I threw myself upon the bed.

Here the delirium ceased, and overpowering grief took possession of me, violent, excessive, to the utmost point of human endurance. I uttered loud cries of anguish, my face was convulsed, and underwent a change as if death had touched it with his withering hand. My companions and the friars quickly surrounded me. The former tried affectionately to comfort me: as yet they were men, not friars, and their hearts really beat with tenderness, and were capable of yielding to the emotions of pity and compassion. The friars also uttered words of common-place condolence; but their hearts, I felt, responded not to the agonies of my soul, and their consolations sounded grating to my ears, for they were but the offspring of the lips; and if anything could add a torture to sorrow like mine at that moment, it would be the necessity of listening to the set phrases of complimentary lamentations. The professor and the holy father guardian were not long in making their appearance, and their words of comfort are still ringing in my ears—"Shame upon you for not behaving more piously; for not being more resigned to the will of God. You are still too much attached to the world. Woe to the friar who is carried away by carnal affections! Amend your ways, otherwise God will punish you. It is unworthy of the holy calling of a friar to

attempt to resist the decrees of God. You ought meekly to bow down your head and thank Him; you are not worthy to wear this garb, if you do not show more resignation, if you are not weaned from the world." All this was uttered in a sharp tone and angry manner; and thus did they try to solace me! They certainly believed they were doing me a kindness: it was a style of consolation in perfect harmony with their characters. The genial feelings of charity, humanity, and compassion, had for ever abandoned their breasts; their hearts had become hard and brawny, and were, in short, — the hearts of monks!

I derived more real consolation from my religious exercises than from any other source. When the first burst of grief was over, I reflected, according to the erroneous notions with which my mind was then imbued, that my dear sainted mother was already in Paradise, blessed for ever, that she would look down upon her child; she would shield me from harm, guide me in my path through life, until I should be re-united to her for ever. These considerations strengthened me in my solemn resolution never to forsake the right path, but to walk in the fear of the Lord, in the full confidence that eventually He would receive me into His eternal glory, there to dwell with her. These consolatory

thoughts shed some balm upon my bruised spirit, strengthening my soul to support the fearful struggle; but I was alone on the earth. I lived, and was compelled to associate with people whom, I felt at that moment, I must abhor for ever. This feeling, happily for my peace of mind, did not long abide with me; it had its rise in the fatal circumstance, and it disappeared, in measure, in proportion as the poignancy of my emotions ceased. But even after I had reasoned myself into composure, many many times depressing thoughts would assail me. How ardently had I looked forward to beholding my mother again in this life. The thought of seeing her once more, whether after the lapse of few or many years, had cheered me on in my joyless career, and had sufficed to yield me comfort. To me it seemed nothing to wait, if I had but the certainty of attaining my wish eventually. But now every hope was at an end. She was gone, and I was left in a state of utter bereavement. Oh! if I could but have retarded her death, what sacrifice would have been too great! But here my soul felt the sting of remorse. Had I not struck the death-blow, when I persisted in leaving her comfortless in the world? I killed her when abandoning her; I saw her lost in grief, unable to shed a tear, powerless to utter a syllable. I completed the murderous work, when I commu-

nicated to her the answer of the general; yes, then it was I killed her. After the violence of my grief was somewhat abated, I read the remainder of the letter, and found that the general's reply was too surely the cause of my calamity. After the reception of my letter, her heart seemed petrified. I was well acquainted with the almost supernatural effect that intense grief had upon my mother; and she now stood, present to my mind, as I saw her at the moment, when I left her so unfeelingly to be a monk. It seems to me that but few mothers can love their children with a love like hers for me—for the son who could so ungratefully forsake her. After reading my letter she continued in a state of complete apathy, which betrayed the profoundness of her grief. Ere long she retired to her own room, being unable to bear up against the dreadful blow. She never left her couch again,—until she was borne away "to the house appointed for all living." Three days after the reception of the letter, death came to free her gentle spirit.

My grief, apparently to others, became less violent; but it was in reality no less intense. I felt an icy pressure at my heart. The persons around me—the followers of the seraphic Saint Francis—seemed to me spectres, despatched from the lower regions, their sole mission to torment me. I beheld in every one of them

the murderer of my mother, and felt that I was their accomplice. Yes, I myself was a murderer! My sleep failed to refresh me: my waking hours were comfortless. I felt the agony of a grief that must be borne in hopeless desolation. When awake, my mind was tormented by frightful visions; when asleep, horrors of every description beset me. Surely it is no rhetorical figure to speak of the heart being wounded. To me it seemed a fact literal enough. I felt mine pierced: the cold iron of grief had entered it, and deadly was the anguish occasioned by the thrust. This state of nervous agitation was the forerunner of a severe illness. My constitution was not robust enough to resist the shock it had received, and I sunk under the trial. It was a slow, consuming malady, and to increase my danger and my sufferings, the doctors mistook my case. They treated it as a pulmonary disease; whereas, it was nothing else than a gradual decline of the vital energy, brought on by intense mental suffering. My physical and mental agony—the remorse I endured for having been, however remotely, the cause of my mother's death—the cruelty manifested towards me by the superiors when this tragical event took place—the disappointment of my hopes of happiness in the monastic life—all combined, were, by slow degrees, wearing my

existence to a mere thread. I felt I should have preferred the gloomiest solitude to the society of the friars. To me the convent appeared more desolate than a desert, and the monks more fierce than its savage occupants. Could I have destroyed every convent on the earth with a breath of my mouth, as plague spots, deforming the surface of the world, most willingly would I have done it, even at the expense of my own life. How frequently did I invoke death to receive me into his realms of darkness! How much rather would I have been an occupant of the silent grave than to feel myself dead among the living! But the vows! Struck with horror at my own impiety, it seemed to me that my disgust of the monastic life and my aversion to the monks were suggestions of the evil one; that in the bitterness of my soul I pronounced a false judgment upon them. I then tried to reinvigorate my zeal, and implored forgiveness of the Almighty for my mental defection. My feelings were wrought up to the highest pitch by the excitement of illness, and, in measure, they softened down afterwards; yet I was not so far from the truth, at that time, as in my calmer moments I tried to persuade myself I had been. Had I considered that I was not only induced to pronounce the vows in ignorance, but also that they were in themselves essentially wrong,

I should surely have seen that they could not be binding upon my conscience one moment after my eyes were enlightened to behold their deceptive character. But before the light of truth shed its benign beams upon my deluded soul, I was to be a witness twelve years longer of monkish superstition and wickedness.

At this period of bodily suffering, and mental anguish I was left without sympathy or assistance, save that accorded to me by the companions of my studies: by all the rest I was most cruelly treated, from the guardian down to the lay-brethren. One even proposed that a potion should be given to me to send me to rejoin my mother. I was wasting away gradually, and my life seemed drawing to its close. I could just move about and walk out a little; but I was completely changed from my former self. The doctor had no hopes of my recovery, unless I had change of air, and left the convent for some time to be under the care of my friends. This, he said, might perhaps restore me, and, at all events, the experiment ought to be tried. He gave me a certificate to this effect, in order that I might obtain permission from the superiors. I wrote to the general, in humble and respectful terms; but he knew nothing of the death of my mother, and he neither believed the doctor nor me, but thought I was pretending

illness. No doubt, in coming to this conclusion, he acted on the principle that it was safer to think ill of a friar than to think well of him. He was one himself, and was therefore likely to form a correct judgment of the race! Acting upon his supposition he replied to me in the following terms:—

Reverend Father,

To obtain permission to go and see your mother, it was not necessary to allege false motives of bad health. Take care that St. Francis does not visit you really with that illness which you now plead only in order to obtain your end.

In the meanwhile I have the pleasure to subscribe myself,

Your Paternity's most affectionate in the Lord,

S. da F.

I felt most indignant at this reply, of course; but seeing that he was ignorant of the death of my mother, I hoped that it was at least unpremeditated cruelty. Thus I bore it without any great bitterness of feeling; but I wrote again, insisting upon the necessity of change of air, and proving the reality of my illness, by informing him of his mistake. Now that my mother was dead, I told him that I was far from wishing to see my native place; that such a visit could only serve to awaken useless regrets, and could neither be salutary to my mind nor my body; but I solicited permission to go to the sea-coast.

Here the matter assumes a serious aspect.

All that I have hitherto narrated of the cruelty of the Capuchins seems to me a trifle compared with what I am about to tell of the general of the order—of one who may one day become bishop or cardinal; of one who, in the humble condition of a friar, occupies a place ranking with the highest prelates of the church of Rome. The general of a religious order was guilty of barbarity towards me unsurpassed, and even unequalled, by the tyrants of the middle ages; for they confined themselves to torturing the bodies, not the minds of their victims. This general was not ashamed to insult the grief of a son, inconsolable for the death of a beloved parent, in the consummation of which event he himself had been one of the chief agents, by sending him immediately the order to visit his native place! This Capuchin general was no other than Father Sigismondo da Ferrara.

I made an attempt to resist the despotic command, for I felt an overwhelming repugnance to visit the place where I should meet with spectators of the lamentable tragedy; with those who had witnessed the desperate grief of my mother. I wrote again, therefore, supplicating, even with tears, to obtain a dispensation from the order. I said that I would rather remain in the convent and die: that going there, instead of yielding me restoration, would hasten my

death. He was inexorable. In fierce words he intimated that I was to go without delay. I had no choice but to submit.

I need not say that my heart was full to overflowing, that I felt completely outraged by the barbarity of the general. I could not restrain my indignation, nor could I refrain from expressing my feelings. Travelling by slow stages, I stopped on my way at various convents, and there, when all the friars were assembled, I told the shameful story of the unfeeling general. Almost everywhere it aroused a sentiment of indignation. Generally speaking, my lamentable case excited the sympathy of the friars, in whom the recital of my griefs seemed to arouse feelings of true commiseration. Even they could feel compassion for me! Yet how many would have acted differently had they been placed in the same circumstances? They were not slow to reprove in others what they themselves would have done in the same case; and in the sequel it will be seen that my reflections upon them are not too severe.

At length I reached *my home!* During the first few days, on seeing the house, the persons, the objects, which reminded me continually of my lost mother, I suffered indescribable anguish, and should certainly have sunk under my grief, had it not been for the tender solicitude of my

relatives and friends, who exerted themselves to the utmost to console me. These kind attentions and marks of affection, together with the care of the doctors, produced at length a favourable result. I recovered by slow degrees, until at last my health was nearly re-established. Five months had elapsed before I could pronounce myself well; but now I began to feel that I ought no longer to absent myself from my convent; for though I was not quite so strong as before, I had no longer the excuse of illness to detain me; and in my sincerity of mind, my conscience revolted at the idea of prolonging my absence when the reason for it had ceased. I felt, therefore, disposed to demand permission to return to my studies, and to my own province, that is, to the convent in which I had performed my noviciate. But the doctors foresaw a fatal relapse, if I exposed myself again to the climate of central Italy. Persuaded by them, I asked permission to continue my studies in the province where I now was. Before doing so, I requested the provincial to give me a testimonial, which he willingly did, in writing, in the usual form. Having obtained this, I sent it to the general, together with the certificates of the medical men, and demanded the permission, on the plea of my health. The general replied to me in the following terms:—

Reverend Father,

In order to obtain permission to pass from one province into another, the consent of both the provincials is required. Procure the consent of the other, and then we shall see.

I remain, yours, &c.

From the date of this letter I anticipated a vexation. Being aware of the necessity for procuring the consent of the other provincial, I had applied for it, and obtained it. It arrived the same day that I posted my letter to the general, and I sent it to him the next day. Allowing for some delay in the transmission of the letter, it might reach its destination three days later than my first, though this was not probable; but his answer was dated so much later than mine could possibly have arrived, that I could not have the least doubt the second communication had reached him, when he penned his answer to me. It was, therefore, easy to infer that the consent he required was already in his hands, and that he was making sport of me. Burning with indignation at his continued ill-treatment, I wrote in reply as follows:—

Reverend Father,

Up to the present time, I have believed that, under the influence of mistaken ideas respecting me, you were acting from conscientious motives, and from conviction; but I am at length undeceived. I am convinced

that your only object is to crush me, to kill me, as you have already killed my mother. I wish to assist you in the accomplishment of your design, and, therefore, ask your permission to return directly to my province; that being near to you, and under your immediate jurisdiction, you may the more easily obtain your end. If I do not quickly receive the permission to return, I shall apply to the "Holy Congregation."

Doubtless the original of these valuable epistolary communications are jealously preserved in the archives of Rome. Should any of my readers have the curiosity and the opportunity to examine the originals, they will, I trust, do ample justice to the faithfulness of this translation.

By my bold and impertinent letter, I had, every one will be inclined to think, rendered my position still worse. I believed so myself; but I was prepared to brave the consequences, though it should even cost me my life. But to the surprise of myself and my friends an answer arrived immediately, containing lenient and gentle phrases. The permission to remain in this province was granted me, with expressions of kindness, and not a word was said of my insolence. I was wholly at a loss to account for such unexpected gentleness on the part of one naturally so tyrannical. Perhaps, being so boldly upbraided for his hardness of heart, which had opened the tomb for a mother, he was touched with compunction, and wished to atone for his cruelty.

But no, that could not be the case. I know the friars and their pertinacity too well. If they offend, they never humble themselves before the offended from motives of repentance. So far from it, they assume the attitude of the injured party and become more and more exasperated against the sufferers. If the monks humble themselves, it is from fear. The observations of many years have taught me, that they are humble, that they are mindful of their vows, that they are forgiving, that they will even resort to flattery, from fear. When they find that evil to themselves is likely to be the result of their perseverance in error, then, and then only, they act as holy men and humbly acknowledge their faults.

So with the general. My threats to write to the Holy Assembly frightened him. It might have happened that they would take my part, not from a sense of justice, but from regard to the honour of the order, one of the standing rules of which is to protect the weak against the strong.

The change of convents was a real blessing to me. I was now under father A — di — L as my professor, one of the best and most respectable men in the order. He was very young, and at that time filled the office without having been elected, his turn not having yet arrived. May heaven's best blessing attend him wherever he

may be! Especially would I pray, for the greatest of all—that the truth may enlighten his exalted mind, that he may recognize the errors of those doctrines which, aided by the sublime ratiocinations of his vigorous intellect, he teaches with so much power. May God's purest favours be showered upon him! He was a precious plant that attained majestic height among the knotted, stunted, withered productions of the convent. Blessings in abundance fill his cup to overflowing! Once more would the poor exile repeat, in grateful remembrance of kindness formerly shown to him, blessings on him, and on all like him, whether they be found under the restraint of convent rules, or enjoying the freedom of Protestant institutions! I learned much from him in the two years I had the privilege of enjoying his instructions. Study, under the guidance of such a man, was a most delightful exercise. He supplied to me the place of father, brother, friend: he was all in all to me.

Perhaps the reader will exclaim, "Well, at last we have found a convent of good honest friars." Alas! he is mistaken. Good honest friars he may look for among individuals, and, may be, he will find one here and there; but he must not flatter himself that they are to be found in crowds. The good form the exception, and even when his penetration has discovered one

or two, he will find that they are kept in obscurity, eclipsed by the bad and deceitful.

Here I might narrate a long history of intrigues, simonies, jealousies and ambitions which divided the convent into two parties; but it is foreign to my plan to prolong the story of the studies; and, having many other matters of more serious interest to relate, I pass by these in silence for the present. In the course of events they will come to be described in a circumstantial way in reference to an occurrence connected with all the friars of a large province. Suffice it to remark here, that the professor was persecuted because he was on the side of justice, but for this once he gained his cause, a case somewhat rare in a convent. I, as was natural, declared my own opinion, which was in conformity with that of the professor. As a consequence, I became the object of hatred to the guardian, and through him to the provincial; and when I had finished the term of my studies, they contrived that I should be sent back into my province.

At length I can present myself to my readers as a professed monk; a friar with all his rights and obligations; and in that capacity I am about to narrate events connected with the lives of many other friars.

The seed sown in bad soil, nourished by stagnant water, hidden from the quickening rays of the sun, springs up in luxuriant rankness, choked by weeds, and is, consequently, altogether unfruitful, or its scanty productions are bitter and poisonous. The leaves, which at first were beautiful to look upon, the produce of a rich vegetation, now assume a sombre hue; the boughs are crooked, too weak to support themselves in graceful positions. The seed originally was good; the plant was of a proper kind; the fruit which it ought to have borne should have been of grateful flavour, goodly to the sight, and admired of every eye. But the soil corrupted the tree, the pestilential air infected it, and insects of hideous form generated in the fruit which struggled to maturity.

So with the friar after his noviciate, profession, and study. How many noble intellects have been deadened, rendered altogether unfruitful by the dimming influence of convent life! How many aspiring natures have been crushed to earth by the arbitrary union of cruel rigour and disgraceful laxity, by a show of real learning and the reality of utter ignorance. Constrained to give up the pure and holy affections implanted in the human breast, a sullen apathy takes their

place, or a desperate frenzy of concentrated passion. The good seed sown in bad ground, if it bear at all, must inevitably bear corrupt fruit.

The noviciate over, we have seen the struggle that takes place between superstition and nature; between submission and rebellion; between strength and weakness; between independence of character and the utter prostration of the will. We have observed the self-sacrifice of the conscientious in subduing their passions, and the rending excitement of those who are carried along, borne away by the power of corrupt inclinations. We have beheld the fearful contest of the principle of good with that of evil in the young friars. We have seen how a good disposition and the exercise of firm principle have served to preserve from destruction, notwithstanding the fanaticism and severity of the system, with the moral blindness which it engenders, and the ignorance of men and things consequent upon its unnatural seclusion. We have also witnessed scenes of fierceness, of maddened rage and desperation in the youthful mind, where passion has not yet been moderated by the persevering exercise of a frigid will. We have seen that the spirit of evil is never weary of sowing its seed in convent soil; nor are there lacking those to cultivate, tend, and watch it; until it springs up a venomous plant; the more dele-

terious that it is often mistaken for another, which is but rarely found in such soil—Virtue.

We have seen these youths, some of them falling a prey to despair—become unworthy of the human name, and appear under the repulsive aspect of wantonness, hatred, and impiety. We have seen them polluted, transformed to basest worms of the earth by the fury of indomitable passion, which, irritated by the trammels of monkish education, has become still more intensified. We have seen the noble nature of others resent the oppression of the oppressor; lift up their heads against the tyrant, oppose firmness to persecution and meet their fate undaunted. Such were bound for their lives to ignoble servitude, no less than others whom we have seen bow their heads in meekness, and yield unwilling submission. We have watched the young friars under various aspects, phases and circumstances, and now we are about to see them as men matured in virtue or hardened in vice; either linked with this, or identified with that in perpetuity. We shall see them in the reality of their life, though that life is an exceptional one. We shall see the passions, before in embryo, now manifesting themselves openly. A fresh page of life's book is about to meet our glance, a page traced in different characters and bearing another colouring. Yet the same being is the

object of our study. Man is still our theme. We shall now see the timid novices, youthful and devout, in the character of monks; men of mature age, haughty, cunning, and impious. We now abandon the victims, and turn our attention to their tormentors.

PART SECOND.

THE VICTIMS BECOME TORMENTORS.

INTRIGUES PRECEDING A CONVENT ELECTION.

I had already been a short time in the convent of M——. My course of study was completed. I was now friar and preacher, and occupied the same position in the convent as the other fathers, with the exception of those who held offices of temporary trust, which, however, I might hope, in my turn, to fill. I lived quietly for some time, and have nothing of any great importance to relate with regard to this period. I endured petty vexations occasionally—an act of injustice from a superior, or an impertinence from an inferior. I was witness sometimes to punishment inflicted without reason, and tyranny practised by the powerful against the weak. But all this is of common occurrence, and my readers are already so well acquainted with it, that such matters now seem of trivial importance. *De minimis non curat prætor.* I flattered myself

that the season of tempestuous agitation was over, that henceforward my life would glide on in tranquillity, my bark wafted by the benign breezes of heaven. But this was mere presumption. Vain was the hope that a monk, still young in years—a friar among friars—should lead a quiet, blessed life :—that his skiff should be launched upon a smooth, even, placid stream, whose waters should never be ruffled by storm or tempest, amid the "Holy Monastic Fraternity."

The sky is serene, the air is tranquil. Nature, in the joyful aspect of fecundity, gives the promise of plenty, and gladdens the anxious eye of the husbandman. The friars, beholding the abundance of the fields, gazing on the splendour of a clear, unclouded sky, and inhaling heaven's balmy breezes, feel their minds soothed to unaccustomed quiescence, and in their bosoms arise a holy longing for repose, a subdued inclination to enjoy the devout, humble, monastic life, absorbed in pious composure. Alternately they pass from the zealous performance of the choir service, which ascends as a sweet savour to heaven, to the grateful solitude of the humble cell; thence to conversation, pure, and redolent of the sweet spirit of charity. Then relinquishing the delightful communing of soul with soul, they proceed to the meritorious and all-satisfying delights of the refectory. How sacred

is this peace: how edifying! Truly peace is a blessing! But lo, in the western sky appears a dark cloud, portentous of evil. The wind blows strong, and soon rises to a gale, putting to flight the gentle zephyrs, which tremblingly shake their golden wings, and retire in haste to their native grottos. The sky is darkened; the distant roaring of thunder is heard; the hurricane sweeps over the earth. The country is laid waste, deserted by its inhabitants; and all animated nature exhibits signs of fear and anguish.

Poor friars! your peace, which in the summer of the year 1835, in your province of U——, seemed so well assured, is but of short duration. The war-cry resounds, occasioning agitation and fright in the timid, and exciting in the courageous a martial spirit, affecting the friars in various ways, according to natural temperament and the pecularity of the circumstances in which they are placed. All these threatenings of war came from the west, from the convent where the provincial then resided. He carried war with him. It promised to be a battle bravely sustained—an energetic, destructive contest, although not fought with the ordinary weapons of carnal warfare. With spiritual weapons—not material; with the arms of hatred, anger, intrigue, and envy was this battle to be fought. Let not my fair readers, then, unaccustomed to the sight of

blood, and who recoil with horror from the contemplation of a wound, be alarmed at this solemn declaration of war. I pledge my word that no tales of physical suffering shall shock their ear; nor shall they shudder at the sight of the mutilated, dead and dying. In my picture the friars will all remain unhurt—comely, sleek, in good condition; or thin, spare, and gaunt, according to the rigour of the penance to which they have been subjected, *in illo tempore*. Every day they will make their appearance to perform the duties of the refectory.

The provincial of the province of U——, was about to complete his triennial term of office—about to retire and be reduced to the comparative insignificance of a simple friar. He was a man somewhat advanced in life, of great stature, great beard, great learning, great severity, and great ambition. He was, too, considered a man of upright intentions and irreproachable conduct. The doctrines he professed were strictly in accordance with the received notions of the faithful, and altogether he was considered deserving of high praise for the manner in which he acquitted himself of the duties of his administration. But in this heart, seemingly so uncorrupted, lurked one secret blemish, *integer vitæ scelerisque purus*. Hidden there, lingered one sin. He harboured in his

bosom the most ambitious desire of distinction. So true is it, that the friars, who keep the vows, form an exception to the rule. They trespass, almost invariably, against one or other of them. The best among them are those who do not break them all.

The time arrived for the provincial to pay the last round of visits to the convents under his superintendence, preparatory to the resignation of his office. It was like the last fond lingering look which a king bestows on his dominions, when he is compelled to abdicate the throne. But though obliged to relinquish his position, the provincial was unwilling to be held in less consideration than he had been hitherto, and this evil he might avoid by securing the situation he held for a protégé of his own. It seemed to him a hard case, as it is almost always felt to be by every one, to descend from an important station to comparative insignificance—to find himself reduced to a level with those who had been his inferiors—to be subject to those who had been subject to him. This is necessarily a great trial for one who has enjoyed the delights of an authority, final and admitting of no appeal. His only consolation, therefore, consisted in the hope of being able to get elected as provincial one of his friends, who might allow him still to enjoy the reality of power, while he contented

himself with the name,—a thing of sufficiently frequent occurrence, but one which cannot be effected unless a person be chosen possessed of the requisite small amount of independence of character, and large amount of weakness of intellect. He now began to make use of every means in his power in order to enlist in his favour those who might be able to assist him at the approaching election, and in this direction he employed all the influence derivable from the station which he still occupied. Could he have foreseen the evils in prospect he would have hesitated to act thus! He made choice of the man who was to be his successor, the man adapted to the furtherance of his own views. Now the manœuvring is about to commence. During his final visits to the convents the plot is to be skilfully arranged. All possible acuteness and activity must be employed, supported by monkish cunning, which is not easily surpassed. All the springs of masterly intrigue must be set in motion. The inexhaustible fund of monkish wisdom and subtlety must be put in requisition on the occasion. The superiors of the convent, the professors and the guardians are nominated by the provincial and the definitors. The definitors are almost all the creatures of the provincial, his adherents, and are bound by a tacit understanding to be his helpers and abettors,

and canvassers for votes on his behalf. His friends were principally the older monks of the province, for he himself had passed the meridian of life. He had naturally promoted his old friends and acquaintances, the companions of his noviciate, his probation and his priesthood, and, of course, he would look to them for support and assistance in every emergency, official or non-official, sooner than to the younger members, of whom he knew little, or for whom he had done little. This visit, then, was not made so much from the desire to arrange, examine, and provide for the necessities and government of the convent—the object of former visits—as with a view to form a party which should consist of the old members of the convents, who were his warmest friends and partizans.

Now he cajoled and promised—now he insinuated gently to which person the votes should be given. According to his representation, the man whom he favoured was a treasure of virtue; zealous, pure-minded, incorruptible, ready to make any sacrifice for the advantage of the order. No person could be found better calculated to fill the post, whether for adjusting wrongs, for abolishing abuses, for keeping the refractory in due subordination, for punishing the violation of morality, or for the general superintendence of the interests of the community. He declared

himself only anxious that the person who would most worthily occupy the place, to the encouragement of virtue and the intimidation of vice, and who was, in short, altogether the most suitable and willing to exercise his power for the general good, should be the man of their choice.

Had the provincial used moderation in carrying out his plans, he might have succeeded without meeting with much opposition; but having once entered the lists, he suffered his ardour to get the better of his judgment. Perhaps,—being irritated by some trifling obstacle, greater than he had calculated upon, or which, may be, he had not looked for at all, and was now disposed to magnify into a matter of importance—he began inadvertently to disclose his ambitious desires, and thus provoke a general opposition to his schemes. In proportion to the resistance he met with, he exerted fresh strength, made greater promises, and availed himself of more questionable expedients. Thus the election promised an excess of agitation and a large amount of bribery, which latter is an almost invariable attendant of convent elections—an *obligato* accompaniment equally common in monastic as in civil elections. The regular orders form a small world in themselves; a world separated from the great world, but peopled by the same race of beings, possessing the

same human nature. One member of the conventual community, the ex-professor, being hostile to the provincial, took note of his various windings and manœuvrings with the wariness and penetration peculiar to ambitious minds. He foresaw that if the provincial succeeded, he himself would be set aside, and this he could ill brook. The thought of opposing resistance to the choice flashed across his mind, and simultaneously the means of effecting it. He began to stir up the young friars, those who had claims or pretensions to preferment, those who wished for advancement and were impatient of the obstacles that crowded their path. Thus matters stood. The work was about to commence. It threatened to be a hard task, beset with dangers and difficulties, accompanied, moreover, with scandalous artifices and evil reports. But, unmindful of these, the work must be prosecuted vigorously, whatever the issue might be. Most of these electors, though young, were ambitious and skilled in artifice, as a natural consequence of their training. In order to succeed, the passion of party must be roused, the most unyielding of all passions; the manifestations of which, especially in religious struggles, are most terrible and bitter. Of necessity, then, a party must be raised to oppose the one already in existence, if that which exists without a rival can be called a

party. This desideratum was secured by exciting the indignation of the most liberal-minded of the young friars, and inducing them to stand forward to oppose the spirit of intrigue. Prompted by the youthful energy and the rashness incident to their age, still so far from the calculating prudence and adroitness of mature life, their feelings were quickly roused to ardour.

Dissentient voices began to utter subdued murmurs of disapprobation. These voices, reinforced by others, became gradually louder and louder, until they rose to open violent clamour.

The fire, so lately smouldering, now broke out into active conflagration, and open war was declared. The faction of the young friars was, by a most impious and perverted application of terms, denominated the "New Testament party," in distinction to the "Old Testament party." Thus, in the height of carnal passions, do men mix up the sacred with the profane, and defile the most holy and sacred titles! The friars were religious men; therefore the appellations of the parties must needs be religious too. With execrable hypocrisy, they introduced a sacred name to cloak their wickedness, endeavouring to cover their own unholy passions with the garb of religion.

"Who are these with hoary heads, pretending to lay claim to every distinction? Is it because

their beards are so long and white, that they seek to exact so large an amount of deference and respect? It is a disgrace to see all the offices in the hands of a few hypocritical saints, just because they possess interest enough to obtain them. Are they to be thus for ever monopolized? Let us see how worthily they are distributed. In general they are held by aged men, hardened in crime, for the most part ignorant, ambitious, hypocritical, or leading a life of open dissipation. And are there none among the young members, who are honest, learned, liberal, and blameless? Are those, whose only fault is youth, invariably to be excluded from holding office, by the deceitful strategy of ambition? Shall the order be for ever deprived of the strength, the activity, the intelligence of the young members, who are thus systematically oppressed by their seniors? What profit, what esteem, what advantage can the order thus gain? Will not the system, permitting such gross injustice, become a stumbling-block to the professing world, instead of standing forth as the corner stone, on which the holy edifice of the church of Christ is to rest? Is infamy to be borne patiently, and shall we thus suffer those who heap it upon us to triumph?"

Generous, bold thoughts like these, uttered aloud, and reduced to practice, could hardly fail

to produce corresponding impressions upon the minds of the young friars. Whisperings, complainings, agitations, consultations in secret, were carried on by both parties, throughout the whole province. At length matters arrived at a crisis. The young friars advanced boldly, and offered so imposing a front to the old ones that their courage was greatly shaken at the outset. Letters were flying in every direction, from convent to convent. Discord had hurled her destructive torch, and when she kindles the flame, it is a hard matter to arrest the conflagration. Fanned by the wind of impetuous passion, the sparks blow from convent to convent, until every combustible material is ignited and burns with impetuous fury. Everywhere the allies were engaged in animated discussions: everywhere strenuous efforts were made to acquire proselytes. Violent anger and implacable hatred—those ever inseparable companions—seemed to find a place in every breast. It is impossible to imagine the exaggeration of fury which characterizes a convent faction. In the history of nations, faction is seen as the rich source of misery to the human race. Faction is the originator of the intestine wars by which the nations of the earth are torn in pieces and destroyed. Faction is, in like manner, the source of deplorable misfortunes in the monkish

world. There the spirit of faction assumes a religious character. Hideous appearances, the offspring of a corrupt nature, are concealed behind a thick veil, which seems to guard the holy place. But I will endeavour to remove the mask and rend the veil, that things may appear in their real form, and faces no longer wear a fair aspect, which should be pourtrayed distorted by execrable passion. It seems to me that it were far better that in the intestine discords of the friars, blood should flow in reality. Nor accuse me of cruelty, fair reader, in expressing such a sentiment. Were blood to be shed, the eyes of the deluded multitude would be opened, and the nations of the earth would cease to prostrate themselves before the authors of these monstrosities, crying, "holy! holy!" as is literally the case at present. Now these furious zealots give to the irritation of wounded pride and extravagant ambition the aspect of holy christian fervour, and pretend to be actuated alone by the magnanimous desire of effecting the triumph of justice and the glory of God!

It shortly became manifest that the agitators made use of the vilest means of seduction to gain partizans. In civil transactions, of this nature, money and preferment are the usual agents of bribery; but in monastic elections it would be natural to suppose that money could offer no

temptation, as the friars have no need of it. They have a sumptuous table—they are surrounded with the comforts of life—they enjoy, in secret, the most exquisite of earthly pleasures, and with the greatest zest, because "stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." They indulge in these enjoyments free from all care, nor are they apprehensive of the consequences. It would seem, then, that money must be useless as a motive power in working the conventual machinery. We shall, however, see before long that the friars are not wholly indifferent to its fascination. If the votes, then, cannot be secured by offers of money, they can be, and are, sold for promises of promotion, or for exemption from punishment to those who have incurred it, or are intending to do so. Sometimes these temptations are openly proffered; but, of course, in all cases, the votes cannot be secured in this straightforward manner. In one convent, the professor is a man of equivocal reputation. He imprudently manifests a strong predilection in favour of some fair one. The town is shocked. The friars are the objects of malicious jests, but the professor escapes reproof, for he has a vote to give. The loss of his vote might be the precursor of the loss of many others; therefore he must not be treated with severity, even if his

conduct were more scandalous than it is. Another professor, under the specious pretext of paying visits to bearded friends in other convents, takes the opportunity of paying his respects to unbearded friends, in dwelling-places of no great sanctity, and is there discovered by some members of the opposite faction. But this must be overlooked. He has a vote, and perhaps the disposal of several others; and the votes, so useful in the cause of holiness, must not be lost, or the consequences to religion may be serious. Two friars of another convent disguise themselves in the evening, and betake themselves to the theatre. They are recognized and accused of the enormity; but no investigation takes place, nor are they punished, lest their votes should be lost. Such cases, and many others, even worse, occurred, and were reported to the superiors; but the perpetrators escaped with impunity at that momentous period. Votes were obtained by leaving irregularities unobserved, until a more favourable opportunity; and many, counting as nothing that God's eye was upon them, if they could but escape human judgment, yielded themselves unreservedly to a dissolute course, secure of indulgence for the time being; though in some of the cases referred to, severe punishments were inflicted subsequently, when their votes were no

longer required. The reader may feel assured that these intrigues are by no means too highly coloured. They will stand the test of strict investigation, and a natural reason may be adduced in support of their truthfulness. Gross corruptions are inseparable from human weakness, when once man has strayed from the path of rectitude. The friars, constrained unnaturally to suppress their inclinations, having once allowed them to gain the ascendency, find them rage with a violence which they have now lost the power to control. *Privatio generat appetitum* is an adage always on the lips of the fraternity, and it is one that they act up to.

It would be a mistaken notion to suppose that the events occurring in the convents in the province of U—— were exceptional in their characteristics, although, owing to peculiar circumstances, they acquired great notoriety, and assumed an aspect of special importance. Though manifesting themselves somewhat more restrictedly, and occurring in a way rather less marked, they are taking place continually and universally, and I have been the witness, in various places, of many bearing the same stamp, and originating in similar causes. Should my narrative chance to fall into the hands of friars, however loud a cry they may raise against it—however fierce a crusade they may preach

against me—however indignant they may choose to appear—if they will place their hands upon their breasts, and cast a searching glance into the recesses of their souls, they will be constrained to acknowledge that it is all true.

In the midst of all the commotion and anxiety of the contending parties, I was at first deluded by the arguments employed by the leaders of the young friars. It seemed to me that justice was on their side, and I threw myself into their ranks. But, soon, I plainly perceived that neither they nor their adversaries were influenced by religious zeal. When I could no longer close my eyes to the fact that they were instigated, alone, by ambition and party spirit, I tore myself resolutely away, determined to remain neutral in the contest, and side with neither party. Without fear or hesitation, I declared that the proceedings of both were criminal and scandalous. I withdrew completely, and, with a few others whom I had induced to regard the matter in the same light as myself, remained a passive spectator. Being no longer mixed up in these unholy proceedings, I had scope to observe the frauds and artifices that were going on.

Free myself from all stain and impurity, taking care to avoid coming in contact with the actors in this drama, and, as it were, looking on

from a distance, I saw clearly all the wickedness of these satanic outbreaks of opposing feelings. I beheld the friars, the young as well as the old, in the midst of a rough and tempestuous sea, in a frail bark, without sail, without pilot, under a threatening sky, driven about by tempestuous winds, enveloped in gloom and desolation, regardless of the proffered light of divine assistance, which alone could serve to guide the tempest-tossed ship safe into harbour. Mist and obscurity reigned over all. And these reckless mariners were friars! These were the men whom the deluded people believed to be so pure, so holy, so meek!

The time for the election arrived. Each of the priests and professed lay-brethren has a vote. The priests are eligible to be elected. Each convent sends two voters to the chapter, the guardian and the discreto. The latter is a father, nominated and voted for in the convent; and the choice of the discreto is, therefore, quite democratic; but the guardian is chosen by the provincial and definitors. All the ex-provincials and definitors can claim a vote, and all are eligible to be nominated for the office, except the provincial who is on the point of resigning. Generally speaking, less than one half of the votes are the result of popular and spontaneous feeling. Most of the guardians, on the present

occasion, were favourable to the provincial. The ex-provincials and the definitors, being principally aged men, would most likely take the same side; so that the discreto alone would represent the general opinion. The votes in the chapter amounted to 140. The province numbered sixty convents; and there were about twenty ex-provincials and definitors.

The guardians and the other officials leave their convents to take their part in the business. They do not always travel together. In some cases private enmities would render such close contact undesirable. The voters are all assembled. Two or three days elapse, however, before the registering of the votes commences, to allow time for adjusting the necessary preliminaries. During these three days all profess to be absorbed in devotional exercises—to be fervent in prayer, that the Holy Spirit may deign to enlighten their understandings, in order that the votes may be bestowed upon the man most worthy of the honour. The two factions were, in reality, occupied, in this interval, in carrying on their intrigues, even in the convent where the chapter was to be held, but without, I believe, effecting any material change, for each, having already embraced his party, would with difficulty be induced to desert his colours. The adherents of the two contending parties re-

cognised each other easily enough, and failed not to demonstrate their mutual sympathies and antipathies, each infusing into the minds of the other pertinacity in remaining true to the party already embraced.

ELECTION OF THE PROVINCIAL OF A——.

The Gauls, on entering the senate house in Rome, could scarcely have been more struck with the majesty of the august body assembled there, than a devout christian would have been on entering the assembly room of the chapter, in the convent of A——, and beholding the holy Capuchins there assembled for the election. A most grave and imposing sight is presented by these friars, the choicest members of the conventsin the province of U——. The long beards, many of them hoary from age, the rough tunic, the grave aspect, appeared to render the place itself venerable. The very air itself seemed filled with a mysterious dignity, as if it diffused over the spectator a sentiment of sacred fear. Through the faint light of a religious mist, the friars appeared as beings of another sphere, commissioned to announce to sublunary mortals the terrible mysteries of the realms of destruction. No symptoms of internal perturbation appeared in their rigid faces. No contraction of a single muscle betrayed the

agitation that was raging beneath that calm exterior. Their countenances were impassible as the grave itself. But oh! how great the contrast between the state of their minds and their outward appearance. Within, all was agitation, trepidation, and fearful suspense. Under that inflexible aspect, the passions of envy and obstinacy raged with rending fury. What a medley of fear, hope, and ambition filled the bosoms of these monks!

They approached to register their votes, many of them with minds embittered by enmity, and prepared to give their suffrages to the very person least qualified to act. Yet these men had the effrontery to lift their eyes to heaven, pretending to invoke divine assistance. The most fervent prayers were uttered that the Holy Spirit might breathe upon them, and enlighten their minds with wisdom and justice; that the business might proceed, not in conformity with worldly affections, but agreeably to the Divine will! Hypocritical vain pretenders! You may deceive men, but you cannot deceive God. Of what avail are your prayers? Think you that you can deceive the King of kings? Think you to persuade Him that your hearts are pure and guileless; that base earthly affections have no place there? Do you hope to persuade Him that your votes are given uprightly and conscien-

tiously? He who tries the reins, and searches the heart; He who reads the most secret thoughts and approves or rejects,—He has His eye upon you, and places a just estimation upon your doings. God will not be mocked, nor will His Holy Spirit operate to direct aright the decisions of minds perverted as yours!

The invocation to the Holy Spirit having been made, they proceed to the scrutiny. The votes are registered and the schedules are opened in which the names are inscribed. Success fluctuates. Almost all the schedules have been read, and the numbers are about equal. One schedule remains, how important are its contents! It is finally to decide the triumph of the one party or the other. To each it seems to bear the message of life or death. The hand which opens it trembles; the eyes that are fixed upon it become dim in the intensity of emotion; the hearts of all beat tumultuously. The suspense is intolerable; the anxiety is intense. The name of the successful candidate is announced. From the lips of the reader thunderbolts of destruction seem to fall upon the one, while to the other choicest benedictions, and paradisaical felicity appear to flow in freshening streams. Upon the Old Testament party destruction is levelled; upon the New Testament party favour is heaped. The sentence is pronounced, and the weighty

decision is finally made. The old friars are defeated, and the young ones triumph. A cry of desperation is uttered. The wisdom of age has been overcome by the audacity and energy of youth, and the Old Testament party fall a prey to disappointment and humiliation.

As instantaneously as a change of scenery is produced upon the stage by the aid of machinery, so suddenly does the publication of the successful name act upon the austere and rigid aspect of the friars. The expression of their countenances changes immediately. Some hang down their heads, and an air of sadness overspreads their faces; others raise their heads, their eyes sparkling with delight, and their countenances expressing exultation. These drink in deep draughts of the cup of bliss, while their vanquished competitors are condemned to sip the bitter dregs of disappointment. There is happiness in triumph, misery in defeat! But the victory of the conqueror will yield him but short-lived satisfaction. The vanquished will not yet submit to lay down their arms; they continue to maintain a hostile position. The strong and courageous are little disposed to be cast down by one defeat, and leave the enemy in possession of the field to enjoy the fruits of victory unmolested. No, the dispersed forces must be rallied, the troops must be harangued, their martial spirit must be

revived, a desperate charge must be made to surprise the enemy, who feels himself secure in his victory, and the fate of the battle may still be changed. The victors may be vanquished after all! Be not discouraged, brave generals. History abounds in striking examples of sudden changes of fortune; of unexpected and decisive victories succeeded by total defeats; of victors vanquished; of the defeated regaining the advantage. That which so frequently occurs in real battles, fought with substantial weapons, may happen in the moral world, in contests waged with spiritual arms. The friars are stout brave combatants, bold in the service of their leader, and they will fight a good fight, and manifest their bravery to the world.

The news of the triumph of the opposition party spread everywhere with a celerity unrivalled, except by the electric fluid. All the convents resounded with the rumour; all were in a state of excitement. The insolence of the victors, and the discouragement of the vanquished, furnished ample materials for discussion. Here a firm step, erect bearing, and a bold countenance. There evident signs of humiliation—timid step, head drooping like a bulrush, and lips firmly closed. Ostentatious rejoicing contrasts with ill-suppressed manifestations of rage. But halt! let not your

demonstrations of joy be quite so vociferous. Moderate your transport. See you not that dark cloud overhead which threatens to burst and annihilate your present felicity, reducing you to your former level, or even below it?

The vanquished party hold consultations. They meet to deliberate in secret, and resolve to make a desperate resistance. What is to be done they do with alacrity. Their activity never flags, but waxes more and more vigorous. The chapter being dissolved, the newly elected provincial and definitors proceed to the administration of their functions. The most influential of the other party write to Rome, declaring the late election to be the result of bribery and simony.

Letters containing these accusations arrived by hundreds in Rome, not only from the chief members of the convents, but also from their followers and partisans. The heap of accusations was perfectly formidable. The general was quite frightened, and commenced an investigation of the affair, with all possible celerity and energy. Being himself old, he would naturally have preferred that the party of the old friars should be successful, and he therefore promptly availed himself of this dissatisfaction, to proceed against the newly elected officials, and mar the triumph of the young friars. He im-

mediately suspended the provincial *ab ufficio*, and sent a commissary extraordinary to institute a searching investigation. The provincial and his party were quite indignant, and wrote to the Sacred Congregation. The affair wore a very serious aspect. The clerical offices in Rome continued to be inundated with communications. The partisans of the suspended provincial urged me to write too. I refused, and became, consequently, the object of their aversion. The other party also urged me to write, and as I likewise refused their request, I became equally the object of dislike to them. The father guardian belonged to the latter, and so I fell into disgrace with him. These unfortunate judicial investigations lasted several months, and the costs were enormous. The friars were obliged to empty their purses which had been so abundantly filled by bribery and artifice. Money was required to purchase the favour of the lawyers and ecclesiastical superiors at Rome. The monastic superiors received, instead of money, presents of the kind most acceptable to friars. Every dainty that could tickle their palates—so difficult to please—was diligently sought, and presented. This courtesy was paid chiefly by the old friars, for, with the wisdom and experience of age, they well knew the best methods of ingratiating themselves. With friar-like cupidity, they sought to obtain compensation for the ex-

penses which they had incurred by writing to their adherents, monks as well as laymen, entreating to be assisted by gifts or paid masses. The war was characterized by the denomination of the "Revolution of the friars," and indeed it was a revolution!

I now began to see what the friars really were when their fury was excited. The hatred of the monks, once roused, is irreconcileable, indomitable. When two of opposite factions meet, words are not required to interpret the fierce hatred which beams from the eyes of both. Could looks kill, the glances which they cast at one another must prove mortal: utter extinction must be the result. Each would gladly reduce the corporeal frame of the other to ashes, and scatter it to the winds! But looks do not kill, and the quarrel continued to rage, fierce as ever. Duties, usually performed in common, were omitted. The superiors had lost all control. The choir at night was deserted. Almost all devotional exercises were neglected. Claustral duties of every kind, with their various rules and penalties, were completely set aside. Nothing went on in regular course. Small groups were constantly assembling, talking, murmuring, and fanning the flames of discord. The only duty implicitly performed—the only observance rigidly maintained, was that of assembling in the refectory. Monastic discipline was entirely relaxed. No censure, no chastisements were inflicted. On

their own party, the superiors refrained from inflicting them for fear of alienating their affections. Those of the opposite party were sometimes compelled to submit to them; but they were always administered in a mild form, in order to avoid raising a fresh storm of indignation. Indeed, irregularities of all sorts multiplied so greatly in the convent, that it would have been impossible to punish them individually, and many profited by this exemption from punishment to resign themselves completely to the indulgence of vice.

It was natural that, having withdrawn myself from both these factions, and remaining in a quiescent state, completely secluded from the rest, I should begin to feel disgusted with a life presenting to me so many vicious examples. I felt so indignant at the unworthy conduct of the friars, that a strong desire to separate myself from them arose in my breast. I did not wish to take this step by demanding secularization, for I had no sufficient reason to offer for desiring it, nor would it have been in accordance with my convictions could I have obtained it. I therefore thought it preferable to make a request to be elected as one of the missionaries of Propaganda, and obtain an office consistent with my present position as a friar. I had no intention of doffing the monk's frock, for my associa-

tions and prejudices were still in favour of the priestly career. I had not yet seen the errors of the system itself to which I was attached.

To obtain the place of a missionary it is necessary to undergo a strict examination in theology. The Roman theology is extraordinarily voluminous. Nothing less than its hundreds and thousands of volumes could have sufficed to obscure the pure, simple, and self-evident truths of evangelical doctrine. Nothing short of these innumerable volumes of crude sophisms could serve to veil the pure light of the gospel.

My request was granted. I received orders from the office of the Propaganda in Rome to prepare for my examination. The examination takes place before an appointed commission of theologians, over which the local bishop presides. It was an arduous undertaking for me, yet I set about preparing myself for it with industry and confidence. I trusted to the studies in which I had already made considerable advancement, and to the divine assistance.

As I have already told my readers, the father guardian of the convent had conceived a violent aversion to me, on two grounds. First, because I had belonged to the opposite faction, and secondly, because, having abandoned my own party, I still steadily refused all his overtures to

join his side. Through him I had received the promise of the office of professor; but this and all other allurements I systematically rejected, and the terms in which I declined his favours were perhaps not the most conciliatory. Now he began to hate me in earnest, and it grieved him no little that my request had been granted. He knew that the change would add greatly to my comfort, and, moreover, I should escape from his hands, before the time to avenge himself had arrived. He now exerted all his powers of malevolence to prejudice me. He gave the bishops to understand that I had expressed myself most boldly, and said that I would make game of all my examiners. The effect of this false accusation may easily be imagined. Had the examiners believed it true, they would have assailed me with so many abstruse questions, that I should have been plunged into difficulties from which I could not extricate myself. I should have failed in the examination, and then there would have been an end to the Propaganda appointment. The guardian had also taken care to represent the matter in the same light to the commissary, in order that he might prejudice the bishop against me, and in these schemes the commissary readily acquiesced.

The plot became known to one who was inti-

mate with the bishop and acquainted with me, and who knew that I was incapable of the vain boasting imputed to me. He informed me of it on the morning of the day fixed for my examination, but it was then too late. I had no means of counteracting the unfavourable prepossessions which the false accusations of my enemies had excited against me. It may readily be imagined my sensations were anything but enviable. Other faults I have, both numerous and grave; but I am not presumptuous. I felt that I was lost, and my heart sunk within me. The examiners made their appearance. All were men of importance, and profoundly versed in Roman Catholic theology. The commission consisted of the bishop, the vicar-general, one ex-provincial of another order, and a rector or professor of theology, also of another order.

The bishop was ordered by the Propaganda to examine me *in Universam Theologiam.* This was one of the most awful moments of my life. I trembled violently when I saw, by the frowning faces of my examiners, how ill-disposed they were towards me. I felt pale as death. My face could not have retained a tinge of colour, so intense was my agitation. The vicar-general, a discreet and courteous man, was the first to think that it was impossible that I could have uttered the vain boasting attributed to me, or I should

have presented myself before them under a somewhat different aspect; for presumption goes hand in hand with effrontery. He communicated this idea to his neighbour, and his favourable opinion was quickly shared by all. Kindly words were addressed to me, and I felt encouraged. The examination was strict, but not conducted with any appearance of hostility. They endeavoured to sound the depth of my acquirements; but they did not try to crush me, as I feared, and as they might so easily have done. My examination, which lasted two hours, was declared satisfactory. All the necessary papers were handed to me, with the certificate of my competency for my office, and a passport to the place of my destination. These the bishop had previously received from the Propaganda in Rome. On leaving the room I met with the vicar-general, who was waiting to see me. He stopped me, and most kindly congratulated me upon getting through so satisfactorily.

On returning to the convent, the first person I met was the guardian. He was impatiently awaiting my return. Feeling fully convinced that his malicious intentions must have succeeded, he was all anxiety to see me and enjoy my humiliation. Knowing so well what were his intentions, I determined to amuse myself a little at his expense. I assumed a crest-fallen and disap-

pointed air. His eyes sparkled with joy when he read, as he imagined, my failure in my face. "Well, how did you get on?" enquired he hastily; "As I was likely to get on, thanks to your kind recommendation," answered I tartly. "Haughty still!" exclaimed he. "It was not my fault, but through your own ignorance that you failed;" and these ungracious words he accompanied by an act still more ungracious. He placed both his hands extended behind his ears, and moved them towards me, in a manner to represent the long aural appendages of the animal employed as an emblem of stupidity. The lay brother who had accompanied me, (for the friars never leave the convent alone,) and who perceived the error into which the guardian had fallen, enjoyed the scene secretly. To shorten the malignant triumph of the guardian I exhibited the papers, and, throwing them on the table, exclaimed, in a fit of irrepressible gaiety, "Read those, and then you will see that you have no cause to laugh at my disgrace." He took up the papers, cast his eye anxiously over them, and stood as if petrified. He could not utter a word; his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and I doubt not that he would gladly, at that moment, have rendered himself or me invisible. While his eyes were still fixed upon the papers, I said, "You see, my dear 'father,' that,

in spite of your perfidious advice, and false accusations, I have gained my cause, and you have been beaten." I might have upbraided him much more severely, for, as I was no longer under him, I had no dread of punishment, and it is not probable that he would accuse me to others, now that his falsehood was so generally recognized. He denied my accusations, but in so confused a manner, as only to render additional proof of his guilt. I remained in the convent until the next day, and thus had the opportunity of witnessing the confusion of my persecutor. About two hours later, when I was engaged in conversation with the friars, I received a summons to appear before the bishop without delay. One of our number, who was, I have no doubt, a spy, for he belonged to the guardian's faction, was ordered to accompany me. The bishop received us kindly, and indeed manifested great warmth towards me. He made us both sit down, and then said, in a grave tone, that he had summoned us to appear before him, in order that he might have the opportunity of justifying his conduct with regard to me, and that the other friar, as a witness, might report his self-justification to the father guardian. "I desire," said he, "to declare that it was not without reason that I treated you with rigour in examining you. But I now find that I was

grossly deceived. You were accused to me of culpable presumption, and it was not until afterwards that I discovered the accusation was groundless." Here he repeated to us the particulars, with a full account of the intrigues practised by the guardian and the commissary against me. He then exchanged a few friendly words with me, and dismissed us. The guardian was duly informed of all, and was compelled to submit quietly to the bitter draught. To add to his mortification he was deprived of the office of synodal examiner, which was an honourable trust, conferred upon him by the bishop himself; and the withdrawal of it was a great disgrace to him. The vulgar proverb was indeed applicable to him: *La biscia becca il ciarlatano:* or, scripturally, "He made a pit and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made."

THE MISSION.

The following morning I took my departure. I imagined that the place to which I was destined to go by the Propaganda, was some half-civilized land, instead of which I was sent to a country enjoying the conveniences and refinements of social life. During the religious agitations, at the period of the Reformation, Rome numbered this place among her missionary

stations, and it then became subject to the Propaganda.

There the Capuchins, with a few secular priests, have the complete control in spiritual affairs. I soon found that the Capuchins were not the same beings as in the convents, but mongrel animals—half friars, half priests. The monk's frock, the beard, and a few other friar-like appurtenances were retained, and their mode of living was like that of the priests. But each had a house for himself, money at his disposal, a female servant, and all the comforts of domestic life. Some few maintained a deportment becoming the sacerdotal character; but others, and these by far the more numerous class, were less scrupulous, and allowed themselves greater liberty, living in a very worldly manner.

The people were simple-minded, ignorant, and superstitious, and were swayed by the friars and priests, who directed them entirely according to their own will and pleasure. I, who believed that I should be sent into a far distant land—that I should have to traverse deserts, and seas, and mountains,—I, who anticipated being exposed to the burning rays of the sun under a tropical sky—to risk my life among heathens, or even among cannibals—to endure hunger, heat and cold, torments, and perhaps death itself, for

the sake of Christ and His gospel—I suddenly found myself surrounded by every comfort requisite to satisfy the tastes and desires of the most exacting monk. I possessed a commodious house, had plenty of palateable food, and was provided with money. Most of my fellow-labourers availed themselves of the assiduous attentions of a female friend, in addition to all other luxuries, in order to render their domestic comfort complete. Such was the place to which I was sent. I did not ask to go thither; it was selected for me. My sojourn in the country was a very long one, and furnishes me with much material connected with my subject—the lives of the Capuchins.

A few days after my arrival I received a letter, which, in a short space of time, was followed by numerous others. These were all on the same subject, and brought me information respecting the issue of the great contest between the factions of the Old and the New Testament. The decision had been made at Rome. The general was old, and the greater part of the members of the Sacred Congregation were advanced in years; so that the verdict was in favour of the old party. These men, ripe in years, knew better than their younger competitors, how to conduct the affair. They knew better how to cajole, flatter, entreat, and per-

suade. They were clever schemers, and so they gained their cause. The sentence was felt to be intolerable. It was quite right that the illegal proceedings of the young friars should be punished, and so far Rome was justifiable in the course she pursued. But it should have been taken into consideration that the old party were not less guilty,—that, in fact, they had surpassed the others in enormity. They ought, therefore, on every principle of justice, to have been equally excluded from office, and to have shared in the disgrace. But such was not the case. The Sacred Congregation confirmed the decision, commanding the deposition of the provincial and his dependents. These two, with thirteen others, considered as the chief instigators in the late commotion, were taken to Rome and imprisoned. Upon their release and return to the convent, they were forbidden to hold any office, and were deprived of the privilege of voting for the space of six years. In the meanwhile, the newly-appointed superiors were inducted into office, nor did they fail to take advantage of every opportunity of triumphing over their opponents.

The partial decision of Rome in the above case would suffice to brand her with eternal disgrace, did it stand alone ; but it is lost amid the number of similar cases of injustice. Every

day sentences are issued from her courts, founded on principles utterly subversive of justice and equity. This, therefore, quickly blended with the rest, and soon ceased to be remembered. All due honour be paid to the "Eternal City," where, seated on the throne elected on the basis of human tradition, sits the *soi-disant* "Vicar of Christ,"—where reside the host of his followers, who, under various denominations—black, red, white and yellow, stand as the pillars of his throne, against which the gates of hell (the large Protestant family!) shall never prevail!

The solemn triumph of the "Old Testament" party was followed by the quick dispersion of the other party. Petitions were numerous. Some asked to be employed in missions; others demanded their secularization; others again wished to return to their native provinces. These requests were readily granted, in order that the seeds of discord might be dispersed. The petitions were made by the young friars, partly from anger, but still more from the wish to escape the persecutions of the victors.

And now let us turn our attention once more to the worthy professor, "the Beauty," and see how he fared all the time. He had been one of the most furious of the partizans, and a chief promoter of the agitations. He, however, managed to colour his proceedings so skilfully, that

he not only escaped punishment, but was even rewarded. His was the reward of treachery. Even tyrants abhor traitors; but by friars they are caressed. He was indeed ordered to appear at Rome, and was incarcerated with the rest; but his disgrace was of short duration. Before the proceedings terminated, he was sent back to his convent, and entered it in his former capacity. He was "reverend father guardian" previously, and "reverend father guardian" he remained. On his arrest, finding himself in imminent danger, he secured his own safety by appearing before the authorities and confessing his errors with an appearance of great contrition. He named each of his accomplices separately, and gave the minutest particulars of every member of the party of which he had been the head. Thus did this worthy leader urge on the destruction of the faction principally raised by himself. He was the only one that escaped from the general wreck, and he owed it to his treachery, and the system of morality in vogue at Rome. There, no doubt, Judas would have been held in high repute!

The prime mover in all this commotion, the late provincial, enjoyed his victory but for a short period. The hand of God fell heavy upon his guilty head. He had not foreseen the consequences that would follow his ambitious

projects. Now he pondered over his former conduct, and was struck by remorse. Conscience assailed him with powerful voice, and he trembled under her reproaches. His mind became unsettled, his reason was troubled. Irreconcileable hatred, wrath, fury, sacred things contaminated, all these he beheld, as the fearful effects of his own misdeeds; and his dread of the resurrection morn and the decree of the Great Judge was awful in the extreme. He could not stifle the voice of conscience. It arose within him as a fierce inflexible enemy, tormenting and enslaving him, and he was powerless to resist the attacks of his self-upbraidings. He fell sick, and during his illness, his remorse increased frightfully. He groaned in despair, and delirium supervened. Escaping from his bed, he roamed like a spectre through the convent, uttering screams, and moans, and fierce ejaculations. His wild appearance struck terror into the hearts of the friars. Raising his hand, he would repeatedly strike his forehead and exclaim, "*Digitus Dei est hic. Digitus Dei est hic.*" It seemed as if his mind experienced excruciating pain at the thought of the evil he had committed; as if the idea was overwhelming, and he was quite distracted by fear and desperation. The friars tried in vain to solace him. He died in despair, unanointed, unshrived; consequently,

according to Catholic notions, without the faintest chance of future blessedness.

The vicissitudes which befel me in my new career will present me in a different aspect to the reader. I hope, however, that the events which I have to relate will not appear less curious than the preceding. Before I proceed to narrate them, I will dilate a little upon the poverty and the abstinence of the friars, in order to exhibit them in true colours, in their various aspects. I shall then return to the novel subject of contemplation afforded by my new position.

VOLUNTARY POVERTY.

The account of the revolution of the friars shows plainly how the Capuchins violate every sacred injunction of humility. I have related this event as an eye-witness; but I could give the details of numerous others, if I were disposed to relate all which were reported to me. There is not a single province, which, with some modifications, is not subject to the same convulsions, at the election of a new provincial. Contemporaneously with the disturbance in the province of U——, others occurred, of a serious nature, in various parts of Italy. In some cases, the fury of party spirit was carried to such an extravagant height, that acts of personal violence were committed, and many were wounded. Such are

the men who profess to be examples of meekness.

The same men take the vow of poverty. I will not now dwell long upon the strictness with which they observe it. A few examples will serve to show their fondness for money, and I must again repeat that, with the friars, no necessity exists which can excuse avarice. Everything they can desire—dainty food and all other comforts of life are provided for them "by charity." The sole exception consists in the prohibition of outward adornment, which is inconsistent with monastic rigour. All other things in abundance, without care or effort on his part, are given to the friar "richly to enjoy." What a delightful thing it would appear to be, to have the opportunity of enjoying the elements of life's good, free from the anxiety of possession. Yet numerous examples might be adduced of covetousness in friars.

One friar of my acquaintance became a thief in consequence of yielding to avaricious desires. He was a lay-brother, and upon him devolved the duty of asking alms. This is a tax upon the people levied by the convents, and collected by the lay-brethren. They solicit all sorts of edibles, wool for clothing, and miscellaneous matters of every description that can be required in monastic life. The deluded populace give

freely; some from pious motives, and some from worldly considerations. The women give most largely, for they are more deeply impressed by the venerable appearance of the priests, and are more easily excited to fervour by the presence of these saintly men.

The lay brother in question went about, on one occasion, begging for oil. He was not very successful. He received but one barrel full, which was not more than a third of the usual quantity. The monks complained bitterly, but the lamentations of the alms-seeker were loudest of all. He declared that piety was vastly on the decline; that religion was greatly neglected; that men had no longer the fear of God before their eyes; that christian charity had abandoned the heart, not only of the men, but of the women, who were no longer inclined to bestow elymosynary gifts upon the friars. If things did not quickly change, he said, they must all die of starvation. The danger did not yet, however, appear imminent, if the appearance of the well-fed friars might be taken as a criterion. These complaints were re-echoed by all. The faithful had become indeed lukewarm of late, and their want of charity was most grievous. The monks narrated extraordinary deeds of charity of by-gone generations, just as classic writers make their heroes discourse of deeds of prowess of

olden times. A lance, a stone, a coat of mail, which a modern warrior could scarce move, was by the ancients brandished like a cane, flung like a pebble, or worn as lightly as a feather. "But times are sadly changed. In these degenerate days it is difficult to collect in a whole village as much as was formerly the gift of a single family. What has previously been obtained in a village, can now barely be amassed in a city. What a city gave formerly can now with difficulty be collected in a province. *O tempora, O mores!*" concluded the Jeremiad of one of the friars, who was proud of a citation, and imagined he was quoting the sayings of a holy father instead of that of a heathen. This lamentation over modern avarice was uttered, not by the old friars only, who were dissatisfied with the present state of things in general, but it was equally the complaint of the young. The cry was sincere and issued from their hearts, wrung from them by the dread of the failure of their future supplies. Their dire forebodings had their origin in the paucity of oil obtained by begging.

A benefactor of the convent came one day to visit the friars. The gratitude of the friars is most intense, on the principle that "gratitude is thankfulness for favours expected." Most welcome are the visits of those who are liberal to the convents. The monks entreat them, with

the utmost solicitude, to stay and share their repast. The place of honour is accorded to them. Every face is turned towards them clad in smiles of welcome. Yes, indeed! the friars are hospitable—towards benefactors! Their gratitude is fervent—towards benefactors! Most warmly do they receive—their benefactors! The benefactors, on their part, will never cease to befriend the friars. The friars are so devout, evince so much pleasure in being favoured with their society. The friars are so different from ungrateful men of the world, by whom benefits are so soon forgotten.

To recommence: a benefactor of the convent of S —— came to visit his friends the friars. When the first salutations were over, they began to speak of the stores obtained by begging, no unusual topic of conversation on such occasions. The gentleman remarked that they had good reason to be satisfied with the abundant stores obtained that year, and instanced the large quantity of oil which he had seen appropriated to their use. His remarks excited astonishment; investigation followed, and it was clearly proved that the lay brother had sold the oil for his own profit. He was examined and committed to prison, but he was shortly after released. Justice required that he should be delivered over to the civil authorities; but to this the monks would

not submit. No, the habit of Saint Francis would be dishonoured; therefore the friars preferred keeping the matter in their own hands. A friar may be a rogue, a thief, a manslayer, a fornicator, a gambler, a deceiver; he may have imbued his hands in every crime, yet christian charity requires the concealment of them all. They must not be revealed, for the order would be disgraced; the convent would cease to be respected; the friars would be less venerated, perhaps even despised. From politic motives the most shameful crimes are concealed. It is true that when opportunity offers, the friars take the law into their own hands; but very frequently crime remains unpunished from their inability to cope with it. Venial failings are visited most rigorously, while real guilt escapes notice, or is forgiven.

Another lay brother died, and a most singular discovery followed his death. His cell was entered and examined, most likely for the purpose of cleaning it. Some pictures hanging against the walls were taken down. Behind them holes were observed in the wall. On examing these holes, and introducing the hand into them, weighty substances were discovered, which proved to be bags of money. Several of them were found; and no doubt this was money which the brother had accumulated by a system

of peculation. His body was interred in the wood, not being permitted to rest in consecrated ground. He had violated his vow of poverty, and had died without atoning for it.

Again, a lay brother had by some means accumulated a sum of money. He commissioned a countryman to buy cattle for him of which he gave him the charge. Under the shelter of the countryman's name he possessed cattle and various kinds of agricultural stock. Upon his death the man went to the convent to receive instructions as to the disposal of the property of the deceased. The friars were completely astounded, and uttered loud exclamations of wonder and indignation. They deeply regretted that the discovery had not been made earlier, that they might have had the opportunity to reprove and punish the culprit. This was now impossible; but they avenged the gross violation of the vow to the extent of their ability. His bones were not suffered to rest in peace. His body was disinterred, and carried beyond the convent precincts to be interred afresh. On examining his cell a considerable amount of money was found beneath the flooring.

After the completion of my studies, I resided in the convent of L——. One day I happened to meet a friar in the street whom I knew. He was about my own age, and belonged to one of

the convents of Rome. He invited me to enter a coffee-house, with the air of one who had both the ability and the inclination to treat a friend. I objected on the ground of having no money. I always adhered strictly to the rule which forbids the possession of it, and, in my simplicity, I believed that he and all the other friars were equally scrupulous. I soon perceived my mistake. "What does that matter?" said he, "I should not invite you, if I had not the means of entertaining you." Upon this I accepted his offer, and we entered the coffee-house. "Some coffee," said my companion, with the commanding tone of one who is accustomed to order and to pay, not with the humility of a poor friar, who begs because he has not the wherewithal to buy. The waiter attended, and received the orders, which were most liberal. Coffee, rosolio, sweetmeats, and other nice things were commanded and served. I, lost in wonder, partook of what was brought, expecting that there would be a commotion at last; for I had no idea that the friar could pay. He asked for the bill; and what was my surprise to see him take out of his purse, (he actually had a purse,) not a few paoli, but a gold doubloon, which, with a show of ostentation, he laid on the table to be changed. I stood looking on like a simpleton observing the transaction. We were no

sooner beyond the threshold than I expressed my surprise to my companion, that he should be in possession of money. "What," said he, surprised in his turn, "have you no money?" "I? No! Can a friar, after he has taken the vows, have money?" "Most assuredly he can, for every one has," replied he, unhesitatingly; "and don't think that the gold piece I have just changed was solitary. I have more of the same sort in my pocket." So saying, he exhibited his purse, and, on shaking it, produced that peculiar musical tone which is alone yielded by the contact of several pieces of the precious metal. He then opened it, and showed me a handful of gold pieces, fourteen or fifteen at least. I could scarcely believe my eyes. Observing my look of astonishment, he said, "we friars at Rome have each our little store. What should we do without money? We have a holiday once a week, and how could we get on without it. Provided with the needful, a merry troop of us meet, and we enjoy ourselves, I can tell you, with good cheer and plenty of wine, and we finish up the day with a good jollification. You may be very certain that we could not do so without money. All who have any sense follow the same course. You will come to your senses soon, and then you will do as we do." I seemed to be in a dream, and could scarcely be convinced

that I was actually listening to all this bravado. "What then," thought I, "are these men? They make the most solemn promise before God, and deliberately break it." I soon found out that his account was a true one. Almost all the friars, when they have finished their studies, and are permitted to begin to celebrate mass, have money in their possession. They obtain it in the exercise of their clerical duties; by saying mass, by preaching, or by confessing bigoted penitents, who are extra-liberal in order to acquire merit in the sight of heaven. They little think that the sums of money, which they so liberally lavish upon the church, are appropriated to procuring the means of satisfying the unholy propensities of the friars! The people believe the friars to be totally destitute of money, poor, exposed to hunger and privations of every sort. But who knows the friars? Only those who have lived amongst them can be cognizant of the double part they play in the drama of life.

Besides those who possess small sums of money, which they spend to gratify their tastes and caprices, and procure additional comforts, there are some who hoard from real cupidity, and who, *per fas o per nefas*, will accumulate, will contrive to amass riches, as we have seen and shall see again in the following case.

I knew of a Capuchin priest, who abandoned

the order and became, I believe, sceptical. This man possessed sixteen thousand Roman scudi, which in Italy is considered a fortune. Lacking the ordinary means of the friars for accumulating money, he had recourse to extraordinary methods of enriching himself. He invented masses of every description, and pocketed the money that was paid for them. It is well known that neither mass, nor any other rite of the Catholic church is performed without payment. Only one mass can properly be said for each day, except on Christmas day, when three are said. But 367 were far too few to satisfy his desires. 3,000 would scarcely content him. Masses from the missions, masses from convents, masses from the Sacristy, masses from legacies, masses from devotees, masses from penitents, masses from the devout, masses, in short, too numerous to mention, sprung from his brain. His imaginative faculties were so active that he would never have exhausted his stock of masses had he lived to the age of Methuselah. His ingenious contrivance was discovered, but he managed to escape from the ecclesiastical inquisition ; and, of course, no other had the power to impeach and condemn him, the matter being entirely beyond the reach of civil investigation.

The covetousness of the superiors, in the domestic management of the convents, is shameful.

These men are frequently sordid, penurious, and exacting in the extreme, in the routine of internal economy. The guardians, on the completion of their term of office, have to lay the reports of their domestic arrangements before a higher tribunal. Those who have made themselves most conspicuous, by a close and vexatious economy, are most warmly applauded for their management, and have the best chance of promotion.

The reputation for charity enjoyed by the convents of the Capuchins, is not too well merited. Self-interest steps in to prompt their generosity. *Do ut des* is no less their adage than that of the generality of mankind. The people say, "the Capuchin is the best among the regular orders. This order supplies the wants of the poor, it feeds the hungry, gives drink to the thirsty, and clothes the naked." Having spent so many years in various convents, I can speak from personal observation; and I know that it is only most unwillingly that such good deeds are performed; though it is true that they are done, and abundantly too. The more it exercises charity, the higher stands the fame of the order; the more popular it becomes, the more it is respected and beloved, the more profusely gifts are lavished upon it in return. But stop, I must say no more! It is useless to attempt to explain the truth; the truth will not be believed. I will echo the gene-

ral cry, and say, "yes, the Capuchin friars are indeed charitable and kind. They are the fathers of the people, and as such the people regard them." But will God regard them as such in the day of retribution, when not alone the works, but even the motives of men, shall be weighed in the balance of justice?

ABSTINENCE AND FASTING.

"Poor friars," say the people, and more especially the softer sex, "what heavy penances they perform! They pray incessantly for the remission of our sins. They mortify their appetites for our sins. They do penance for our sins. They fast continually for our sins." They fast? Indeed they do but little of that. They mortify their bodies? Indeed that is just what they never do. Oh, ye rich ones of the earth, at whose tables are served sumptuous banquets; where, dressed with all the delicacy of ultramontane art, appear the most costly of exotic productions—oh, ye princes of the earth, on whose tables meet the rarest viands which human art can prepare to tickle your fastidious palate; think you that you alone indulge in the luxuries of the table in right of your rich revenues? No, these humble men, these alms-receiving Sybarites, these beggars that live upon charity, well know how, without riches, without

revenues, to obtain and prize, equally with yourselves, the delicacies of the table, which are generally believed to be the exclusive privilege of wealth. These Capuchins, of squalid appearance, clothed in serge, with shaven heads and bare feet, presenting the very type of humility and self-renunciation, enjoy the luxuries of life with a prodigality unknown to you. Their feet are wearied after a long walk; they need to be strengthened to endure fresh fatigue. They wade through torrents, toil along dusty roads, traverse mountains, and pass through swampy marshes, as they ostentatiously declare, and as the world believes. The world can do no less than yield them the means of refreshing their travel-wearied feet with strong and costly wine. Yes, these self-renouncing friars no sooner enter a convent than they bathe their feet in wine. The brother friars assist, with christian charity, in the observance of this rule of hospitality, enjoined upon the primitive Christians. In former times, however, pure water sufficed for the ablution; now nothing else than wine will do.

The poor friars have, with one exception, no enjoyment in the things of the world. They have renounced all pleasures except one. Their only worldly comfort is good cheer. Of this they partake freely, and who would say them nay? Surely one solitary indulgence may be

permitted them.* By a plentiful supply of nourishing food the body becomes strong, the blood healthy, the imagination fervid and active. It is true that their temptations are increased in consequence of their indulgence; but what does that signify? Have they not strength to resist in proportion to their temptations? Is not their virtue strong to overcome all the assaults of fleshly lusts? Have they not strength of will to quiet all perverse inclinations? Certainly. They are saints. They belong to the elect. They are devoted to the service of heaven, and although indulgence in the gratifications of the table may cause the flesh to rebel against the spirit, piety and spirituality are sure to gain the victory. The friars must triumph. At all events christian charity forbids a contrary idea; and such is the general belief. Their spiritual merit stands the higher, in the estimation of the world, in proportion to the obstacles overcome, and their resistance is regarded as a new cause of praise.

The friars have three carnivals in the year, of two or three weeks duration each. These are the only periods in which they can recruit their

* The friars have a proverb, *In questo mondo, non abbiamo altro che quello che possiamo masticare,*—we can call nothing our own, in this world, but what we have swallowed.

wasted strength, to enable them to support the mortifications of the rest of the year. During these few weeks they have seven courses served at dinner, all substantial and choice dishes, the most dainty morsels that can be provided. At supper they have five courses. By that hour, in spite of their plentiful dinner, they have regained their appetites, and their digestion is again most active. These courses are as substantial as those of the dinner, and are dispatched with equal facility by these men of iron frame and tranquil conscience. No compunctious visitings disturb the sleep or diminish the appetites of the friars. They enjoy a blessed serenity of mind, and neither remorse nor disquietude of any kind ever mars their digestive functions. And this is the time of the carnival! Poor men! Take care to furnish the fortress with ample stores to sustain the siege of approaching Lent! Quick! be alert, be valiant! There is still one week left during which you are exempted from appearing at the midnight service. Then comes Lent, with its heavy duties, and its interruption of your slumbers. Lose not courage: the laws are indulgent. They allow you seven dishes at your evening repast during the last week of the Carnival. Your fine fowl, your pigeons, your game, all must give place to insipid fish, which, although it may be most exquisite and costly,

is not to be compared to succulent meat. Drain your wine cups. The wine is not costly to you, though the world call it so. Spare it not; drink freely. Eat while you may. Revel in the luxuries of the table. You need not consider expense, not a care need possess you. You have no property to undergo diminution by your indulgence in sensuality. Your gluttony is no sin. You leave no children to deplore the consequences. You have no patrimony to squander. All that you enjoy is heaped upon you by the charity of the faithful *macte virtute.* It is the last day, good friar, of the carnival. You feel slightly indisposed, you are suffering from indigestion. Never mind! The provisions of the season must be consumed. The stores must be exhausted—those furnished so abundantly by the faithful, when the squalid lay brother, with wretched air and miserable famished look, presented himself to beg "a small fowl for the poor friars." Complete your havoc before the carnival ends. You must not keep any of these delicacies to the rigorous fasting time. The temptation would be too great. Truly it would be subjecting yourselves to the torments of Tantalus. But I see I need not warn you. You are wise and prudent, and you are acting sagely. Despatch the provisions, and thus act in conformity with the wishes of the donors.

Lent has arrived! Well, you must fast, you must mortify the flesh; but you must not die of inanition. A good table is necessary, or you will suffer too much from contrast with the past few weeks. You need double the supply that the secular orders require when they fast, for your digestion is twice as active as theirs. Supper is now a sadly scanty meal, quite unworthy of the holy activity and the claustral zeal which are so energetically manifested in the refectory at other seasons of the year. It consists simply of fish, bread, wine, and fruit. Such fare is scarcely better than starvation. A miserable fish! Not miserable as to quantity or quality, but because it is the solitary dish at supper during the forty days of Lent, always excepting bread and wine *ad libitum*. Fortunately the friars are wise and provident. The slender supper is foreseen and provided against at dinner, which consists of four dishes—none too many in prospect of the slender evening meal. The bottle of good wine is valuable now; or they would be overcome by weakness. Just to ornament the table, fruit must be forthcoming. Three different kinds of fruit are presented, but this is a simple item. It needs no dressing, but may be enjoyed in the state in which nature offers it.

In this way do the holy Capuchin fathers

mortify their fleshly lusts. It is thus that the friars, by penance, open for themselves the door of paradise—thus they obtain the reputation of godliness, and gain the adoration of the people! Call me not severe, gentle reader; but reflect that I apply the lash, not to any individual, but to the general habits of conventual life. Down with your masks, ye hypocrites! Be it mine to pourtray you in your true colours, bereft of the tinsel and trickery of Roman Catholic stage effect!

THE MISSION HOUSE.

At length I arrived at the Missionary station, my new place of abode, and became subject to the Propaganda. A charming country opened before my eyes. All that was beautiful, grand, and imposing in nature, was exhibited in the landscape before me. Fresh verdure, water springs, lakes, hills, mountains, and valleys; a pure cloudless sky, a fresh and bracing air, all combined to form an enchanting picture. I was delighted, and anticipated that the mission district would prove a most charming residence. I found the inhabitants, for the most part, unpolished and ignorant; but, at the same time, innocent and good natured. They were principally peasants. The few families belonging to the class of citizens, though not boasting the refinement of an

accomplished education, united to moderate acquirements frank manners and a simple and hospitable style of living. These qualities render those who possess them far more agreeable than others, who, presuming upon their greater natural gifts, and superior advantages, are too often filled with pride and arrogance. The impressions produced upon me by the place and people were most favourable; but before I had been there very long I discovered the existence of elements calculated to render them less agreeable and attractive than I had at first imagined. The friars were there. Genuine friars. Not such as they appear under the restraint of convent regulations, closely watched by their companions, conscious of being under the eye of the people, and jealously observed by the inquisition. Here they were free, unfettered in action, without control. Many appeared openly, before the eyes of the public, such as they were in reality; while others, who indulged in every kind of vice in private, continued to wear the mask in public.

With all my experience of the life of the friars, I was not yet more than twenty-six years of age. I had already seen much of them, but much more remained for me to see. What discoveries should I have made had I remained amongst them until the figures denoting my age had been reversed! I went to reside with a friar who had

been for some length of time located at the missionary station. The house in which I was to take up my abode was one of those called, by a strange misapplication of terms, "hospitals." A hospital, in the proper acceptation of the word, means a house of shelter for the destitute; but there it signified neither more nor less than a comfortable house for friars. In the hospitals, or mission houses, the friars live singly or two together. They have a salary, but are provided, in part with the means of subsistence by offerings and gifts of goods and money. I reached the hospital with a heart light and full of hope. On entering, I was met by the friar. But what a revulsion of feelings! I presented my papers, though not without the utmost repugnance. I saw before my eyes an apparition portending evil. The man's appearance was frightfully repulsive. His black beard was rough and matted, his dark piercing eye had a fixed expression of fascination. His face was ash-coloured, and of deadly paleness, and the mouth, cheeks, and muscles were all elongated, as if he were suffering violent pain. He really did experience pain, mental if not physical, in seeing before him a fellow-monk, whom he felt as an intruder upon his privacy, and whom he was already prepared to hate with instinctive detestation. He had scarcely attained middle age, yet two deep wrin-

kles, commencing at the nostrils, passing close to the corners of the mouth, and descending to the lower jaw, gave him an habitual expression of discontent and disgust. To complete the picture, he was tall and lank, and his limbs were stiff as if they lacked joints. His monk's frock was old, patched, and dirty. Such was the appearance of the man with whom I was destined to live. My illusions vanished; the bandage was removed from my eyes; my confidence was gone. An internal voice whispered me that I should be more miserable than I had ever been, and I began to fear, that so long as I was associated with monks, I could never hope to be otherwise than miserable.

Let the reader imagine a man, rich, powerful, and ambitious, before whom, in his glittering saloon, presents himself, quite unexpectedly, after an absence of many years, a brother of forlorn aspect, clothed in rags, and whose mien bespeaks the depression of abject poverty. With what icy coldness does he receive his unwelcome visitant, and how quickly do the hopes of the unlucky intruder sink to freezing point. Such was my reception by the friar, and my feelings too sunk to zero. "Perhaps you are deceived; he may, after all, be a good, kind man," whispered hope, endeavouring to instil a ray of comfort into my bosom; "a noble soul often

lies concealed beneath an ignoble exterior." But, alas, I soon experienced that the ugliness of his person, extreme as it was, was slight compared to the deformity of his soul.

I settled down with the friar as my companion. He treated me with neglect, and even with disdain. I always endeavoured to treat him with deference, as my superior in age, though we were of equal standing. Indeed I exercised more forbearance towards him than towards any other man with whom I ever came in contact. But all in vain. I soon experienced that it would be impossible to live with him. He was perpetually annoying, contradicting, and insulting me in various ways, so that it required more than the patience of a friar to bear with him. It seemed impossible for him to be calm and settled. He wandered through the rooms at night like a nocturnal bird. His face, like an Egyptian idol, was always hooded. He rose with his hood on, ate with his hood on, walked with his hood on, and, for aught I know, slept with it on too. The poor servant he treated in the most tyrannical manner, reviling and ill-using her for the most trifling violation of his wishes. But even when most excited by passion, did a visitor unexpectedly arrive, his appearance changed instantly. His voice and look were subdued at once. He was humble and courteous, spoke as

softly as if he were repeating an "ave," and seemed ready to give the fraternal kiss of peace. To the simple-minded people who visited the house he appeared a sainted being.

My office, as missionary, was exactly the same as that of my companion. I was invested with the same rights, and subject to the same duties. According to custom we ought to have performed the sacred functions of festival days alternately. He would, however, permit me to take no part in the service, fearing, I suppose, that I should put him in the shade. I found, in the course of a few weeks, that my failing to officiate was attributed to incapacity, and excited against me the most unfavourable impressions in the minds of the populace. I was now fully resolved to avail myself of my rights. The declaration of my intention aroused, on his part, a burst of the most violent anger; but I insisted, notwithstanding all his opposition. I prepared a sermon, and all were surprised one Sunday to hear me preach, and celebrate mass too, with the utmost composure and propriety. I do not know that my address was eloquent, but the congregation appeared perfectly satisfied. I had one advantage over the preachers to whom they were in the habit of listening. It is true it was only a physical advantage, but it produced its effect. My tone of voice was clear

and sonorous, not nasal like those of the majority of the friars. My words, flowing freely from my chest, found ready egress from my lips, and the people were pleased without knowing why. Altogether I made so favourable an impression upon my auditors that I soon began to stand high in their estimation, instead of being, as formerly, an object of contempt.

The friar was so enraged at my presumption, and at the success which attended my efforts, that he left no means unemployed to weary and disgust me. On one occasion he insulted me so atrociously, in the presence of the servant, that I determined to apply to the prefect for permission to change my place of residence. The prefect was one of the most amiable men that could be met with, not only among friars, but among men in general. He was far advanced in years, and possessed as much erudition, connected with convent lore, as a friar ever does. He was affable, courteous, and of simple habits; and his reputation was unblemished. Of a humane disposition, he was rigorous to himself and indulgent towards others. His manner was winning, from its simplicity. His heart was sincere, untarnished by a grain of deceit. He ruled with mildness and wisdom—not with the wisdom of the cunning intriguer; but with that of a just and modest man. He had, I believe, notwith-

standing all his perfections, the singular good fortune to escape being persecuted by the other friars. To his innocent simplicity of manners, and his sincere humility of deportment, he must have owed the exemption. The malice of the enemy is confounded by the child-like attributes of meekness and sincerity. I waited upon him to make known the miserable condition in which I was placed. He sympathized fully with me. The bad disposition of the friar had already been manifested in the same way on previous occasions. He accorded me the permission I sought, but I had not occasion to avail myself of it.

On the following Sunday I entered the pulpit to preach my farewell sermon, and commenced my discourse thus:—"for the last time, my brethren, that it is my privilege to address you."—At this announcement a murmur ran through the church, and some moments elapsed before the sensation subsided. When quiet was restored, I continued, and proceeded without further interruption. On the conclusion of the service I was surrounded by the congregation, who entreated to be informed of the reason of my sudden departure. They requested me to meet them at the public hall of the community, and there they pressed me so urgently to give them my reasons, that I was compelled to avow publicly that I was leaving on account of the

treatment I had received at the hands of my fellow-monk. Shortly afterwards a deputation, consisting of four consuls and two judges, waited upon me, in the name of the community, to request me to remain, and saying they would dismiss the other friar. For a length of time, they told me, they had looked upon him as a model of saintly perfection; but at last their eyes were opened to his true character. I hesitated for a long time; but finally yielded to their importunities. The deputies went to him and intimated to him, in a grave and firm manner, that he was to consider himself solemnly and formally dismissed by the community, who dispensed with all further services from him. They allowed him eight days to arrange his affairs, give all necessary information to the prefect, and decide where he should go. The rage which Father G—— exhibited on hearing the announcement could only be compared to the fury of a tiger. His face did not flush, his eyes did not sparkle, nor did his respiration quicken, as is generally the case when intense indignation fills the breast. No, in him the manifestation of anger assumed a more hideous form. The grey colour of his face became perfectly livid, his firmly-compressed lips were of a deadly whiteness, his eyes were almost hidden under his eyebrows, his eyelids contracted at their corners, and gave him a look

of the most scornful malevolence. Oh how disfiguring is passion! The repulsive exhibition of suppressed rage, spite, and hatred, gives to the face a demonaical expression, and man, at such moments, really wears the aspect of a fallen angel. Transported by passion he resembles a desert lion newly escaped from the snare of the hunter. In the former case, reason perverted sways the mind with the utmost strength of malevolent will. In the latter, unbridled fury altogether blinds the reasoning faculties. A diabolical expression of suppressed rage manifested itself on his face at that moment, and the words to which he gave utterance were in keeping with it. I could not repeat the epithets he bestowed on the community. Suffice it to say he vilified its members and bestowed upon them the most contemptuous appellations. To the deputation he was little more courteous, nor did he spare me. Seeing that face, buried beneath its hood, throwing forth glances of hatred and malignity—that countenance, contracted by the fury of silent rage—those eyes, that exhibited a world of bitterness and insolence, and those lips, giving vent to the coarsest expressions of anger, I fancied I beheld, not a human being, but an unearthly object, returned from the doomed regions where eternal misery stalks. He seemed one of those tormenting spirits sent from the

world of the condemned to menace guilty man. The deputies of the community were utterly astounded. For myself, I rushed from the house, taking nothing with me, and flying as if I were escaping from destruction. I felt the very presence of the man oppress me like a nightmare. "Such are the friars," said I to myself. "These are the men who once appeared so holy in my sight! Oh, horror of horrors!"

Quite bewildered, I went to the house of the prefect, and there took shelter until the tiger should have abandoned his lair. In a week he left. He went to the prefect's house for a time, but it may be readily imagined that he was little welcome now that his real character was discovered. He remained but a short time longer in the mission, and then left and went elsewhere.

Upon commencing my solitary life in the mission house, I expected to begin with a credit of 1100 frs. at least, as my predecessor had but just received the annual contributions of the community. But I was grievously disappointed. Whether he was induced by revenge during the last week of his stay, to alter his accounts, or whether the registers were originally so arranged to mask his rapacity, I know not; but, instead of commencing with a nice little sum in hand, I found myself 700 frs. in debt. I was in a state of great perplexity, and knew

not what course to take. If I accused him of peculation, and endeavoured to compel him to render an exact financial statement, the affair would become notorious, and my proceedings would be interpreted as the effect of revenge. I determined, therefore, to be silent, even though I should die of starvation. He had rifled the house so completely of everything, includ- the provisions, that I think he must have destroyed a great part by fire, for I met with no indication of his having sold any thing. I resolved to live in the most penurious manner until the debt should be paid, and for six months I deprived myself of meat and of everything else beyond the barest necessaries. I thus contrived, by the end of the year, to have the debt liquidated, the house supplied with provisions, and a little to spare. This shows how abundant are the means of the friars in those places. Such was the commencement of my life among a race of men so new to me—half monks, half lay-men.

A few words about the servant. When I took possession she was very ill, and continued to grow worse for a few days, when she died. Upon her death bed she declared that the cause of her malady was the ill-treatment of the father. During the last week of his stay he was perfectly ferocious, and never addressed her

without uttering an imprecation. This furious language was principally directed against me, and, on one occasion, when she attempted to justify me, he fell upon her with savage violence, and actually held a knife to her throat. She believed that her last moment was come, and her terror was so great that she never recovered from the shock. Her death was the work of a man, who for years and years had enjoyed the reputation of a saint.

THE MAGDALENA.

I must now introduce to the notice of the reader a man of most amiable and devout aspect. His beard is black, and naturally velvety. It is not, however, kept so trim as to manifest ambition on the part of its wearer to stand pre-eminent for its beauty. The beard is, as we have before said, an object little short of adoration to a Capuchin, and the desire to be distinguished for its beauty is a stumbling-block even to the most humble. Those who have short, rough, ungovernable beards, are quite as envious of their more fortunate neighbours, as women are of each other's attractions.

He had the smoothest beard that ever eyes beheld, even on the face of a Capuchin friar; but it was impossible to suspect him of the weakness of feeling proud of it. His face was

rather thin than otherwise, which added interest and delicacy to its finely chiselled lineaments. The profile was perfect. His complexion was clear and pale, and his skin so white as to indicate noble descent. His deep black eyes formed the most remarkable feature of his face, sparkling and humid at the same time. It seemed as if nature had bedewed them with the soft tint of love. But yet, in this master-piece of nature, in these eyes so languid and tender, the close observer might discover indications of malevolence and hypocrisy. To those endowed with less penetration it seemed, as he raised them towards the celestial regions, that they caught the inspiration of divine love and charity. In presence of beauty's daughters they were bent on the ground, timid and modest, as if fearing the witchery of woman, or dreading the effect of his own upon her. His full clear forehead gave ample proof of intelligence. His figure was slight. His head bowed, as if with the graceful humility of piety. His arms were generally crossed over his breast. His attitudes, elegant and easy, seemed, by their unstudied grace, to declare that he gave no heed to the vanities of the world, nor desired to be thought handsome or winning. His voice was so low, so gentle, that it seemed a continual succession of monotonous notes of the softest harmony. It

never rose to loudness, nor approached to harshness. His words flowed sweetly and profusely from his well-shaped lips. A charmingly expressive smile played round his mouth, enchanting irresistibly. His words were so honeyed, so redolent of sweetness, that his lips, as it were, distilled the nectar of Olympus. It surely seemed that he had learned his accents from the language in which the angels speak sweet converse in heaven. I first beheld this saintly Adonis at the solemn devotion of the mass. I could divert neither my eyes nor my thoughts from him. He seemed a being apart from all other men. I fancied him a denizen of some region, altogether aerial; far removed from the gross materialism of our terrestrial atmosphere, which seemed to rarefy itself as it melted around him, and to become purified and hallowed by contact with that angelic form. He entered the church with his head bowed low, his eyes fixed on the ground, his step uncertain, as if a tremour, arising from fear and devotion, pervaded his whole frame upon his entering that holy place. He appeared not to see any one, but every eye was fixed upon him, and every body made room for him to pass to his place. His place was by an altar, above which was a picture representing the sorrowful "mother of God." He prostrated himself before the sacred image with an air of

pious abstraction. His head inclined, his arms crossed, he remained motionless, seemingly lost in meditation upon the sufferings of the blessed virgin. From time to time he raised his beautiful eyes adoringly to her face, and fixed them on hers for a moment entranced in devotion, then uttering a sigh, deep, prolonged, and sad, he resumed his former position. I cannot tell whether his appearance produced upon me sensations of fascination or repulsion. I know not whether I regarded him most as a saint or a hypocrite. All I know is, that the most contending emotions took possession of me as I observed him. The reader may mentally complete the picture which I have endeavoured to sketch, when he learns that the appellation bestowed upon him was, "the Magdalena." Ought not the world to feel itself fortunate in possessing one perfect type of humanity? In vain might such an one be sought in the general walks of life. The profane world is not worthy to possess a man of holy, unimpeachable character. Beyond the narrow and exclusive circle of the friars it would be useless to search for such a treasure! The Magdalena forms one of the principal features in the sequel of my narrative.

I was so incessantly occupied in the fulfilment of my duties, that I had little time to see any

of my brother friars, and held scarcely any intercourse with them. The Magdalena was the one who lived nearest to me; his residence was not more than half a mile from mine; but I seldom saw him, and only exchanged a few words with him, or any of the others, when we met accidentally. I have, therefore, of course, but little to relate of my fellow-monks at this period. It was a new life to me, a life of activity and usefulness to my neighbours. My time was no longer passed in idleness and discontent, and in watching the evil proceedings of the friars. I, though a friar myself, felt at my ease, and happy to be separated from my colleagues. My occupations were arduous and incessant. Night and day I was called upon to attend the bedside of the sick and dying, notwithstanding that the parish was in the hands of secular priests. I could not refuse my services, nor did I desire to do so. As a friar, I was constantly in requisition, summoned to attend in every case of emergency. I journeyed over mountains, toiled through forests, and travelled on in spite of snow and ice, and every impediment; whilst the others rested quietly, and enjoyed unbroken slumbers. In addition to the spiritual care of my flock, I had to preach and to superintend the school. Apart from my labours, I led a most retired life. I was

acquainted with a few good people of the place, and they sometimes came to visit me; but I rarely, or never, went to see them. I was beloved and respected by those with whom I came in contact, and I did my utmost to fulfil my duties with diligence and zeal. This year was not, however, entirely unproductive of events worthy of record. Circumstances occurred claiming mention here. Some transactions reflecting credit upon the friars have to be noted. Truth compels me to burden my account with so many base actions, so much wickedness, that it is a great relief to dwell upon some worthy object, offering a contrast to the general mass of impurity. Such an one I have now the pleasure of presenting to my readers. But, alas, much of evil still remains untold!

About three leagues distant from me, with an intervening mountain between us, lived a friar belonging to the same mission as myself. His circle of influence was even more extended than mine, and his occupations were manifold. I was not intimate with him, for I had but rarely seen him. Indeed our acquaintance was very slight, being limited to the exchange of a few brief words when we chanced to meet accidentally. He was highly esteemed through the whole country, and well deserved to be so. He was very well informed, of unblameable conduct, and

most untiring charity. He effected all the good that one man can accomplish by his own activity and energy, and he performed his good deeds without ostentation or hypocrisy. I heard him highly commended in every quarter.

In the parish over which he had the superintendence there lived two young widows, both very poor, and each having a child. Their two brothers-in-law had compassion upon them in their misfortune, and desired to marry them. They wished to fulfil the parental duties towards the children of their brothers, and to provide for the maintenance of the widows. They were poor men, but they were active and willing to labour, and were capable of earning enough to maintain a family. They applied to the father, as their parish priest, that he might obtain for them a dispensation from Rome. He was disposed to comply, as he approved of their intentions with regard to the widows of their deceased brothers; but he feared it would be a matter of difficulty to obtain it, as a dispensation was rarely accorded in the case of widows and their brothers-in-law. He wrote to Rome, and represented the case so favourably, stating that the two men were moved by motives of piety and christian charity to desire the union and that no intimacy whatever had existed before, that the dispensation was granted immediately and gra-

tuitously. Rarely is it the case that anything is obtained from Rome without money! One condition was, however, annexed to this permission, which was that the consent of the bishop should be obtained. The dispensation was accordingly laid before him for his approbation, and he returned it, signifying his good will, for which he charged twelve dollars and a half to be paid to him by each of the contracting parties. The father, who knew the poverty of the affianced couples, and to whom the demand seemed most exorbitant, went directly to the vicar to try to arrange the matter in favour of his protégés. He found him, however, obstinately bent upon pressing the claim, and the friar, well knowing that the ecclesiastical law favoured the bishop, was compelled to withdraw without having effected his purpose. He summoned the two men before him to communicate to them the obstacles which had arisen in the way of their union. He endeavoured to calm them, and tried to persuade them to be resigned, as there was no help for it. "We will find a help for it," replied they, indignantly: "we can do without the dispensation."

A few months after, it became but too evident that an illegal union had taken place. In this emergency the friar went again to the bishop and talked to him so seriously, frightening him

by the threat of a popular demonstration against him if he continued to withhold his consent to a legal marriage, that at last he was induced by motives of prudence to yield, and he granted the dispensation gratis. But from that moment he hated the friar who had shown so much resolulution, and he resolved to be revenged on the first opportunity. He had not long to wait, and with the alacrity peculiar to a Roman Catholic priest, he seized the occasion of revenging his wrongs. The bishops and friars are ever ready to avenge themselves, notwithstanding that the gospel enjoins forgiveness—notwithstanding that they are perpetually preaching forgiveness; but it must be borne in mind, as some explanation of their conduct, that all day long the vulgar adage is on their lips, "do as I say, and not as I do." This has become an axiom with the people, and the consequence is, among bigots and devotees, the priest is looked up to with the utmost reverence, though proofs of his anti-christian conduct may be abundant, and the place of his abode may resound with his evil deeds. The bishop, then, though he preached forgiveness, panted for vengeance.

The community of the district had ceded to a company of timber merchants a great many forests at a very low price. They had yielded, for one thousand dollars, wood that was worth

many thousands. The purchasers belonged to the principal and most influential families of the country; but they did not hesitate to descend to the commission of a mean action. They employed craft and cunning to take advantage of the poor rustic people, who understood nothing about business. They were induced to yield to the insinuations of the merchants, who made a capital market of their ignorance. However, one condition of the contract was, that only a certain number of trees, and those not the largest trunks, should be felled in the mountain woods, which overtopped the village, and sheltered the cultivated plain. Without this precaution the village would have been exposed to floods and avalanches at the melting of the winter snow, when the torrents of water and the moving masses of ice would be liable to produce serious devastations, if not impeded by the trees in their precipitous descent. But the cupidity of the purchasers caused them to disregard this condition. They cut down the timber to a much larger amount than they had bargained for, so that the village, as well as the surrounding country, would have been exposed to the dreaded danger had they been permitted to proceed in their work of devastation. The community was furious. The friar, an excellent man, who always protected the poor against the

oppression of the rich, was most indignant. He braved the anger of the merchants, and, being the only person in the village capable of acting with intelligence and activity, he prepared himself to maintain their rights, at whatever cost to himself. A long discussion ensued in the chief place of the district. The father exerted his utmost ability. No lawyer took any part in the case. He alone made the defence, and he made it so cleverly, and identified himself so completely with the cause he defended, that no advocate could have shown more ability. To such clear evidence did he reduce the fact that the interests of the community had been sacrificed to the rapacity of a few private individuals, that sentence was given against the merchants. They were condemned, not only to desist from their illegal destruction; but to repair the damages already done. As a punishment for their dishonesty, they had to pay a fine to the community, consisting of a sum ten times greater than the value of the wood illegally cut down, besides paying the costs of the litigation.

It is easy to imagine how the friar was extolled, not only by his own community, but also by those around, and his popularity was much increased by the event. The estimation in which he was held before was great; but it now seemed really unlimited. And here I would

appeal to the opinion of my reader as to whether his conduct was opposed to the precepts of the gospel, whether he acted sinfully in defending the poor against the rich.

According to the notions of the bishop, however, his conduct was most blameworthy, and he was resolved that it should not pass unpunished. He accused him of having mixed himself up in popular agitations, and also of being a free-mason. Rome is ever ready to support her bishops, however tyrannical, rapacious, and oppressive their conduct may be. She favours the ultramontane bishops more particularly, because the papal authority rests chiefly upon their submission. If they were not honoured and courted, they might withdraw their allegiance, and separate themselves from Rome altogether. Naturally, therefore, the representations of the bishops are listened to. Urged on by the merchants who had lost their cause, and to whom he willingly joined himself, in the hope of gaining partizans for the revenge he contemplated, the bishop accused the friar of the crimes already mentioned, before the Propaganda at Rome. Upon this, Rome sent an order to the friar to return into his own province, which order was accompanied by a severe rebuke. The decision emanated from Rome, in spite of the highly favourable report of the good

prefect of the mission—in spite of the favourable testimony of all the friars in his behalf, and in spite of the interposition of the local authorities, who represented him as a real shepherd to his flock. He was so beloved by the community that the fear of losing him made them rebel. They protested that if he were forced to return, they would have no other priest. They threatened that, rather than yield, they would invite one of the Protestant clergy; and, doubtless, things would have been carried to an extravagant excess, if the moderation of the friar himself had not provided a remedy. He exerted all his influence, and quieted their minds by a gentle address. He exhorted them, if they really loved him, to show their affection by moderating their exorbitant zeal. He said he should look upon it as a proof of their affection, if they would leave him to submit to his fate, and allow him to go quietly away. His address and representations calmed their infuriated minds, and they finally allowed him to depart in peace. The community, by a unanimous vote, offered him, as a parting gift, the sum which the merchants had been sentenced to pay as fine; but he refused it steadily, contenting himself with accepting a mere trifle to serve him on his journey. Thus departed this truly good man, accompanied by the lamentations and

benedictions of the whole population. Upon returning to his province he wrote directly to his superiors, enclosing the testimonials in his favour, to serve as his justification. The only replies vouchsafed to him were fierce and cruel taunts. One of his friends, who was a lawyer, undertook to go to Rome to plead his cause. By the exertion of untiring zeal and consummate ability he succeeded in carrying his point, and obtained not only a full justification of the character and conduct of the friar, but redress for his wrongs as well. The authorities regretted, most probably, seeing that it was dishonourable to themselves, that such a man had been persecuted. They acknowledged his innocence, and appointed him prefect of one of the distant missions in the New World. Upon his destination being made known to him, he expressed his gratitude; but requested, instead, to be permitted to return to the place where he had already spent several years, and had been so much beloved. His request was denied, lest the bishop of the place should be offended. His departure to the distant station was insisted upon, and he went. I never heard anything more about him; but I have little doubt that he is still pursuing his beneficent career. May God enlighten his mind, and give him eyes to see and grace to renounce the errors of his religion.

In that year I witnessed the invention of a most disgraceful contrivance to satisfy the rapacious desires of the priesthood. I can now see the extent of its infamy. Then, though I did not approve of it, yet I did not regard it in its true light, and, as priest of the place, I shared in the profit without any compunctions of conscience.

The vicar pretended to devote himself to the promotion of the spiritual welfare of the people. He made this parade for no other reason than to derive private emolument, and to fill his purse with the proceeds. He availed himself of the ignorance and superstition of the simple inhabitants, to adopt a subtle method of increasing his own stores, and, as a good brother, at the same time, those of the other priests. One day, during his pious meditations, he was struck by an uncommon solicitude respecting the souls of the dead. His heart was deeply moved by the contemplation of the torments suffered by the departed spirits in purgatory. He thought, in his piety, that in order to deliver them more quickly than could be effected by the masses, holy offices, and other machinery of the church already in use, that he would devise a new plan. The benefit derived from the reading of masses,

and chanting of offices, was a privilege enjoyed exclusively by the rich, and it was necessary to find some means adapted to the resources of the poor. Though persons in the humble walks of life could not afford these expensive luxuries, they would willingly sacrifice their mite to deliver their dear ones from fiery torment, and introduce them to the joys of paradise. Pondering over the various methods that presented themselves to his mind, and invoking the aid of divine inspiration, a noble idea flashed across his brain. He welcomed it enthusiastically, and thanked heaven for having opened to him the way of providing for the poor souls, who, leaving only needy relations behind, had not dared to hope for deliverance through their assistance.

He set a price upon the orations recited for the dead, and this price was fixed with impartiality according to the length. He who had only a few coppers to spare could command an oration equally with him who could pay for his with gold; the only difference being in the length of the oration. According to the new sacred sliding scale, for one *pater* said for a deceased friend the charge was five soldi; for three *ave marias*, six soldi; one *de profundis*, eight soldi, and so on. The people were much pleased, and innocently submitted to this method of enriching the priests and friars. They rejoiced

that to them were opened the treasures of the church for the assistance of their friends, without heavy charges. To them, in the ignorance of their minds and simplicity of their hearts, it appeared a sublime idea, and they embraced it enthusiastically. The priests could scarcely, at first, realize the fact that their incomes could so easily be augmented; but, indeed, it soon proved a very considerable increase. From that time a new course of prayers commenced. On Sundays, before the regular hour for service, the priest in surplice and stole, stood in the midst of the church, with the people all kneeling around him ready to respond. He then repeated fifty or sixty half *paternosters*, the people giving the other half in response. They recited in the same way, the *ave marias*, the *de profundis*, and the rest. In this holy work he spent about an hour. The confusion of the voices was most intense. Now a *pater*, then another; now an *ave maria* by a different voice; then a *de profundis*, were chanted in haste, in every variety of tone and time, of loudness and softness, and all interspersed with the rattling of money. To deceive the poor simple people still more, the name, surname, and profession of the person, for whom the prayers were read, were pronounced, accompanied by bombastic titles. On poor trades-people the titles of most illustrious, most

honourable, most worthy, and all other superlatives, were lavished most liberally. No doubt the titles of highness and majesty would willingly have been added, had not the country been under a republican form of government. The women, who never enjoyed any titles whatever during their lives, were honoured with them in death. Doubtless their decaying bones rejoiced over the honour in their silent graves. "Let us repeat a *pater* for the soul of the late most illustrious judge and consul, or for the most illustrious lady, wife of the judge or consul, at the request of her most illustrious daughter, Mrs. N ——, or her most illustrious son, Mr. B ——." And if the judge, or the consul, or their illustrious consort had left other sons or daughters, (observe the cunning device,) they, finding their names excluded from the announcement of the prayers, were obliged to order others to be recited, lest they should expose themselves to remarks.

There was a foreign priest, a refugee, in the country, who was a man of considerable talent. He felt very indignant at this innovation, and wrote a book against it, which, with great felicity of expression, he entitled, "The Sacred Tariff." His intention to publish met with much opposition, but he persevered notwithstanding. It, however, produced no other effect

than that of displeasing the people. Another person, a learned and courageous layman, also wrote against these infamous abuses, but without producing any effect. But a priest, equally learned, wrote against both, accusing the authors of the pamphlets of incredulity and atheism. The reader may be inclined to hope that this priest was zealous for his religion, and wrote from the dictates of faith and conviction. The following fact will give a juster estimation of his character. An old woman, who had lived in the utmost indigence, died. She had existed by charity, and seemed wholly destitute of the means of subsistence. After her death, it was discovered that she had amassed a considerable sum of money; not less than 36,000 frs. She left this money to the priest who had written in favour of "The Sacred Tariff," and against the pamphlets, on condition, however, that he should build a little chapel in honour of the virgin, in a place which she specified. He erected a chapel, but one much larger and more magnificent than that proposed by the old woman, and he was praised in proportion. He also built a house for himself, adjoining the chapel. The day for the opening solemnity arrived. The people of the neighbourhood flocked in crowds, attracted by curiosity, or instigated by a spirit of devotion. The priest

exhibited a magnificent ceremony, about which no expense was spared. He dedicated the chapel to a Madonna of great fame, held in high veneration throughout the country. In the midst of the ceremony, just when the admiration and enthusiasm of the people were wrought to the highest pitch, a loud shout resounded throughout the sacred edifice. A general cry followed, not of terror, but of admiration. A cry of religious transport was uttered equally by men and women. Voices were heard exclaiming, "kneel down, kneel down." All were prostrate in a moment. "A miracle! a miracle!" The priest, in amazement, raised his eyes to the spot, which was attracting the general attention. Marvellous was the sight that met his glance! The face of the new Madonna was perspiring drops of blood. Streams of the sanguineous fluid were trickling from the forehead downwards. He prostrated himself. His face touched the ground. For awhile he remained in profound adoration, uttering sighs and groans. The people, following his holy example, sigh and groan likewise. In a transport of inspiration he apostrophized the image, which had sanctified the chapel by so notable a miracle. A perfect phrenzy of devotion and enthusiasm seized upon the credulous bystanders. The countenance of the priest was radiant with

triumph. The fame of the chapel was secured; and, as a consequence, a good income for himself.

The report of the miracle spread abroad. The ignorant believed it. The less ignorant, but devout, remained in a state of uncertainty. The wise and prudent doubted, and asked questions. Further, they assembled in a body, and paid a visit to the bishop. One of their number had known the priest intimately, and believed him to be, not only incapable of such superstition, but even incredulous. The bishop, who had no private interest in upholding the miracle, sent a deputation to institute investigations; but, at the same time, he was cautious to appear to believe it. The deputies examined the picture on all sides. Upon raising it to the light, they discovered that it was perforated with small holes, and at the back a sponge was concealed, saturated with blood. The sponge was so arranged, that by means of a string, communicating with the house, it could be pressed. Thus the phenomenon was explained. If all the miracles which are performed in Roman Catholic states could be examined into, how many sponges would make their appearance! During the ceremony an accomplice of the priest had been concealed in the house, and, at the moment agreed upon, had pulled the string.

The Roman bishops are generally slow to punish such frauds. They are practised for the glory of God and for the good of souls; but this time the affair had created too great a sensation to be overlooked, and the bishop could not well avoid punishing the deceiver. Probably, too, his inclination prompted him to inflict punishment, not so much for the trick of which the man had been guilty, as for his not having accomplished it better, so as to avoid discovery. The Spartans punished thieves, not because they had stolen, but because they had been so awkward as to be detected. The impostor was suspended during the bishop's pleasure, but he did not lose courage; he was a man of undaunted spirit, and boldly met the circumstances. No longer permitted to retain the priest's office, he became a publican. With the money left him by the old beggar woman he opened an inn, and, for aught I know, he may be an inn keeper still, if he has not returned to his former profession.

Such is a true account of the zealous defender of the faith, who wrote in favour of the Sacred Tariff. He has numerous brothers and allies in the apologists of the faith of the Vatican.

I have now the pleasure of being able to relate a noble action of a friar, in connection with the tariff innovation. It will be conceded that it was a magnanimous action, standing out

conspicuously from so many that were the reverse. One of the mission friars, Father B —, in addition to writing against the tariff, had the courage to speak against it from the pulpit. He was a man of powerful mind, and most enthusiastic character. He possessed considerable learning, and a profound knowledge of the Hebrew. His conduct was exemplary, and his rectitude challenged the strictest investigation. He was endowed with one valuable quality, which is never wanting in a just man, who feels persuaded of the correctness of his own views—courage to defend the truth undauntedly. He spoke against the new religious imposition, and proved it to be antichristian, fraudulent, and impious. He preached with great warmth, and was listened to with the utmost respect. The district under his religious guidance took his view of the case. The enlightenment of the people greatly depends upon the priests. If the priests are devotional men, they have generally great influence over the minds of the people. The vicar, frightened at the audacity of the friar, and fearing its effect upon the people, caused him to appear before him. The friar presented himself, when the vicar said, in his blandest tones, "Father, I sent for you to perform an act of duty, which it grieves me much to be obliged to discharge. I am sorry to

have to give you a word of admonition." "If I have erred," replied the friar with dignified frankness, "I am willing to submit to correction, and promise to mend my ways." "Praised be God," said the other, with hypocritical emphasis, "that I find you disposed to amendment." "But of what am I accused?" interrupted the friar sharply; "I beg of you, Monsignore, to come to the point." "Immediately," said the other, with a still softer modulation of voice. "Your conduct, in point of morality, is good, and perfectly correct, and the ecclesiastical court is highly satisfied with it." "According to what you have just said, Monsignore," interrupted the friar impatiently, "I came here to be reproved for my faults, and not to be praised for my virtues." "Now," said the vicar, "the fault with which you have to reproach yourself is that you hinder the deliverance of souls from purgatory; that you defraud them of the assistance which they otherwise would derive from the prayers put up for them. You deprive the poor of the means now at their disposal of obtaining, for a small sum, the prayers of the church, for the earlier release of their departed friends from purgatory." "What I say about this matter, Monsignore," rejoined the friar, "I say conscientiously." "I beg of you," said the vicar, "if you can say nothing in favour

of the practice, at least to be silent. I do not wish to interfere with the scruples of your conscience; you are at liberty to think as you like. I am strong in the faith in our holy mother the church, and our holy father the Pope, who cannot err." "And I," said the friar firmly, "speak according to the gospel, which is infallible." "Well, then, we are agreed, and I am heartily glad of it. I hope, father, that we understand each other, and that you will not advance anything but what is in accordance with the doctrines of our holy religion." "Certainly, but I shall speak as I am inspired by God."

Thus they parted; the friar satisfied to have avoided an open rupture, without humbling himself, or yielding his point; the other flattering himself that he had obtained his object, and that the friar would henceforward be silent. But he was deceived in his expectations. The friar spoke more decidedly than ever, and, as it often happens that the detection of one error of Rome is the means of bringing others to light, such was the case now, and he began to incline towards Protestantism. The friars were in despair; they regarded him as a disgrace to the order; but he was in a free country, and they could not imprison him. The prefect, a mild and conscien-

tious man, prayed to God to enlighten him, and bore with him patiently. The friar became more and more confirmed in his views. His brethren, not being able to incarcerate him in the dungeons of the Holy Inquisition, treated him as if he was mad. I felt compassion for him. I believed his zeal to be excessive; but I admired his courage, and I was the only one of the friars that manifested affection towards him. Some days after his conversation with the vicar he received a letter from him. This letter he showed to me and many others, and his answer as well. The letter expressed, with profound and hypocritical lamentations, the great grief and scandal that were occasioned by his irregular conduct. He was implored to renounce his errors, which must inevitably, if persisted in, expose him not only to temporal punishment, but also to eternal perdition. The concluding sentence of the letter ran as follows: "I pray to the Father of Light to illuminate your mind." To this he replied: "Monsignore, I have searched through the whole Bible to find the names employed in scripture to designate God, but I have nowhere found the appellation, 'Father of Light,' applied to him. I therefore conclude that the deity to whom you allude, must be your particular god—mammon. I remain," &c. I do not commend the tone of the letter; but it should be

borne in mind that it was written under the influence of great excitement. The idea sprung from a mind agitated by indignation, but at the same time zealous for the truth. As might have been foreseen the friar was accused at Rome. His immediate recall was the consequence, and he was ordered to return to his own province. He prepared himself to obey the summons. His friends strenuously advised him not to return to Italy, anticipating that he would fare ill there. They wished him to abandon the friar's habit and seek a safe asylum. But he would not accede to their suggestions. "For the sake of truth," said he, "I am resolved to brave all danger." At his departure he was followed by a crowd of villagers, who looked upon him as a martyr. At the bridge, where he was obliged to take leave of them, he stopped. His words were so touching that they seemed to be inspired. Why, oh why did he not yield to the voice of truth which spoke to his heart? Why? Because he had been brought up to believe the doctrines of Rome, and immense effort is required to free the mind from their pernicious influence. This effort must be induced and aided by the Spirit of God, or the heart will never incline to appropriate the gracious invitations of the gospel. "Without me ye can do nothing." (John xv, 5.) "So then it is not of him that

willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." (Romans ix, 16.) Man trembles to renounce his sophisms, though he clearly recognizes them as such. He shrinks from it as from apostacy, and feels that in abandoning them he is guilty of a greater crime than in remaining true to them. The doctrines of the Roman Catholic church pervert the heart of man to such a degree, that he shrinks with horror from obeying the dictates of reason. The mind, while under the influence of Romanism, is incapable of accepting the truths, which, by the special grace of God, are so well calculated to illumine the darkness of the natural man. The force of prejudice, in opposition to reason, is productive of most curious phenomena; but nowhere are its effects more strikingly marked than in the religious education of Roman Catholics. Whoever, among the pupils of Rome, dares to adopt the gospel as his rule of faith, and follows its dictates with sincerity of heart and integrity of purpose, may prepare himself to become an object of execration to all. Even by sceptics and atheists he will be held in abomination, and looked upon as an outlaw. The Roman Catholic system of proselytism is most crafty. The great secret of the unity of the church of Rome consists in her embracing all, even unbelievers and the openly profane, as members of her body!

Can such members lay claim to the title of Christians ?

But to return. The friar uttered tender words, which were responded to by tears and sobs. He wept with the people, and, giving them his blessing, tore himself from them. After a sad and solitary journey he reached his convent, where he was no longer treated as if insane. It was now in their power to punish his obstinacy. He was accused of impiety, thrown into prison, and condemned. I know not what became of him; but I could wish that he had taken refuge in England. In this hospitable country, even though he might be condemned to a life of toil and obscurity, he would breathe the air of liberty, and could think, say, and write freely, whatever his convictions might prompt. But, alas ! it is too probable that the grave holds his weary body, and that his spirit has returned "to God who gave it."

FATHER F——.

I had now spent a year in my present agreeable position. One day I received a visit from the prefect, who was accompanied by the Magdalena, whom he had invested with much power, and who frequently acted as his delegate. I received them both with courtesy, the prefect with real pleasure, for I felt veneration and regard for his character; Father L——, (the Magdalena,)

because I was in my own house, and I could do no less in the presence of the former. The past year had, however, given me an insight into his character, which rendered his visits anything but agreeable to me. I had myself been the victim of his double dealing, and had learned, experimentally, that he combined the attributes of the fox as to his mind, the hyena as to his heart, and the cat as to the stealthiness of his proceedings. They seated themselves, and the prefect thus accosted me, speaking in his usual gentle manner: "We come, my son, to beg of you to grant a request which I am about to prefer." "Speak, reverend father," said I, with sincere expansion of heart: "every word that you utter will be sacred to me as a command, and I will execute it most willingly." "No, my good father," replied he, taking me by the hand, "I do not mean to command you; but I shall feel grateful if you will consent to my request." "Oh," said the Magdalena, with his eyes raised to the ceiling, "Father G—— is a dear man: I am quite edified by his readiness to submit his own will to that of his superiors. Would to God that all the other friars were like him," with a sigh which seemed to well forth from the depths of his tender heart. "Father L——," replied I, with some severity, "I believe that none of our brethren of the mission would be so

wicked as to fail to respect and venerate the will of our worthy father, the prefect, whom we all feel to be a true father to us." "Alas! Father G——," he proceeded, preserving his sanctimonious manner, and uttering another sigh, his eyes moistened by emotion, "you are still young: you are yet new to this place, and you do not know the other fathers, who wear the venerable insignia of the seraphic Saint Francis. I can only wish, for your own sake, that you may never know them. Oh!" he exclaimed, with trembling lips, and eyes upturned, raising his hands at the same time towards his forehead, as if in the act of supplication, "oh! that all were like you!" This exclamation he repeated twice, in his softest tones. I endeavoured to show by my manner that I paid no heed to his flattery, and said quietly to the prefect, "reverend father, will you oblige me by explaining your wishes?" "My wishes are that you would have the kindness to receive Father F—— into your house. If you consent I shall look upon it as a particular favour to myself." "Most willingly," replied I; "it will indeed be a pleasure to have a companion." The prefect had a perfect right to fix the friar's place of abode without consulting me; but he did not wish to exercise the right to my annoyance. The Magdalena was not so com-

pletely master of himself as to hide a thin, and all but imperceptible, cloud of displeasure, which ruffled, for an instant, the tranquillity of his serene countenance. It was excessively slight, and passed by like the vaporous exhalation arising from a stagnant pool, which is quickly lost to view in the transparent lucidity of the atmosphere; but not before it has infected plants and animated beings with its poisonous fumes. I appeared not to notice that hasty indication of feeling. When he heard me agree to the proposal, he came softly up to me, and took my hand in his own, which was soft and velvety as that of the cat while her claws are still sheathed. Looking at me, with the tenderest affection, he said, in a voice trembling with the excess of feeling, "Are you acquainted with the man, my dear friend, who is to come to reside with you? Are you not aware that no one is able to live with him?" said he, with a tone of solicitude, like that of an anxious mother, who would guard her son from evil. "I know very little about him," replied I; "but I shall do my best to please him, and shall be surprised if we cannot get on together." "Oh, blessed soul!" exclaimed the father, with lachrymose voice. "Come! let me embrace you for your noble sentiments." The gentle prefect, in the simplicity of his soul, which harboured not a

suspicion, was enchanted with the caresses which Father L—— bestowed upon me.

The wily man tried to lay a snare for me. He hoped that I should refuse to have a companion, and thus sow for myself the seeds from which must spring vexations, suspicions, and persecutions. My refusal would have afforded him great satisfaction, as enabling him to speak of me disparagingly, with a chance of obtaining credence. But finding his hopes deceived in this respect, he repeated to me reports of the querulous disposition of the friar, believing that if I still persisted in having him, yet, with my mind prejudiced against him beforehand, I should receive him in so hostile a spirit, that a rupture might occur at any moment. I gave a fresh blow to the hopes of Father L—— by entreating of the prefect that the administration might be confided to the new comer, as my senior. According to the rule it was my right, as I had resided there longest; but I desired to show this mark of deference to his hoary head, over which seventy winters had passed. "Oh, no!" said the prefect. "We are perfectly satisfied with you." "Oh dear, no!" echoed Father L——, moving his hands before his face like wings, and drawing down the corners of his mouth, and lengthening his chin, so that it represented a projecting oval, at

the same time raising his eyebrows and contracting his forehead. "Oh dear, no!" repeated he. "It can never be allowed that the administration of the house be taken out of your hands to be given into those of another; disinterested, just, and exact, as you are." After some further dispute upon the subject, I concluded by saying, that it was not my intention to yield; but that we would speak of it again another time. They departed, and I was forced to submit to another embrace from the enthusiastic Father, who called me by my name in the most graceful diminutive imaginable, praising my integrity, my faithfulness, my disinterestedness, and other good qualifications, to the amount of nearly a score. Fortunately I was but little elated by his flattery. Had I believed all he said I should have been puffed up with pride, and fancied myself a saint at least.

And now I hope my reader feels some curiosity to know the real character of the man who was to be my companion. Well! he was a nice man enough, and would have been a worthy person had he not been a friar; but having broken his vows he had forfeited all claim to respect. He had been engaged in the mission for forty years. He possessed a most valuable servant, who really seemed to understand everything. She had even learned to act as a friar,

so that her master could repose while she took his place, and performed his duties. Perhaps, while she was still young, it was by no means displeasing to the young friars to have to arrange religious matters with her, instead of her master. But things did not always go on smoothly. Perhaps the airs she assumed were felt to be excessive, or perhaps the rigid notions of the devotees were shocked. However, the friar became the subject of remark, and the *friaress* was talked about. The scandal was too openly discussed for the authorities to close their eyes and ears to it. It was intimated to him, that either he or his servant must quit the place. The friar was so submissive that he did more than he was bid. He left the place, taking the servant with him. He became curate in another mission house. They had now acquired fresh courage; they set the world at defiance, and enjoyed each other's society in holy tranquillity. After a time she put forth her old pretensions to act the friar, and he, with his accustomed pliability, gave way to her. Complaints were renewed. For a while they struggled against them, but at length he was called upon to remove from that place, and they agreed to separate. She was lost sight of, and he became supernumerary in a mission house, where two friars already resided. Here they all disagreed

so terribly, that it was necessary to remove him once more. It was at this juncture that the proposal was made to me to receive him. Such was the man to whose arrival I was looking forward. I did not think it necessary to believe all that was said against him. I had seen him and spoken to him, and nothing indicating immorality was apparent to me.

He was a native of Germany. Though he had resided for so long a period in a country where Italian was spoken, he had but a most imperfect knowledge of the language, and spoke it in a manner which gave him quite an idiotic appearance. The construction of his phrases was completely German. He simplified the verbs in a wonderful manner, always using them in the infinitive. He was a man of very inferior capacity, and my intellectual powers gave me greatly the advantage over him. His aspect was marked by the characteristic German simplicity, which gives to the head of a family so patriarchal an appearance. His manner expressed sincerity, and freedom from artifice and cunning. From his eyes sometimes beamed a look of astuteness, observable in persons who, through the whole course of their lives, have been the tool of others, or have made others their tool. Without learning, without enthusiasm, and equally void of malevolence and

misanthrophy, he had led an easy comfortable life. He had enjoyed the society of a companion, the luxury of a well-furnished table, and the blessing of good health. He was, moreover, in receipt of a large income, secured with very little effort. It is true that he met with tribulations in his old days, as we have seen. But he had the hard skin of a friar, which, thanks to the discipline, and the wearing of hair cloth, is not over sensitive or impressionable; and physical and mental sensitiveness are generally found to be inseparable. His appetite was truly German, and his trials by no means affected it. He had passed many years of his life in making others his game—in his turn, being made game of by them. But he had also spent much of his time in gaming literally. His passion was playing at cards for money. He played with young, with old, with poor, with rich, with the friar or the fair. To him it was all one that his adversary was young and beauteous, or old, haggard, and toothless. He soon wanted me to play with him. But more of that hereafter.

A few days after, the prefect paid me a second visit, accompanied, as before, by the dear Magdalena; and, moreover, by the old Capuchin. I received him respectfully, for indeed, notwithstanding all that was said of

him, he impressed me favourably, and I felt disposed to prefer him to some others who bore a better reputation. I spoke to him of the respect and regard with which I would treat him, and said that I should be obedient to him, as a son to his father, and that I hoped to find in him a father indeed. The gravity of my narrative forbids that I should here repeat the strange manner and words in which he replied to me. The prefect and his inseparable Magdalena called me aside, and spoke again of the necessity of retaining the management of the expenditure in my own hands. I replied, that we would shortly decide the question, and requested them, meanwhile, to return to the apartment we had just quitted. Father L—— judged of me by his own character. He certainly thought that I only pretended to be willing to give up the accounts in order to make a merit of it if I retained the administration; or, in the contrary case, that it might appear I had resigned them voluntarily. All the while he firmly believed that I wished to keep them. He desired it too, from no love to me, but because he foresaw, from the covetous disposition of the old friar, that my retaining the accounts in my hands would be an element of discord, which might further his views. They returned to the sitting room, and I joined them, with the regis-

ters and a small bag of money. Addressing myself to the friar, I said, "Father F ——, here are all the registers of the administration. I willingly cede them to you as my senior." The prefect looked much surprised, but could not, of course, say anything against my proceedings in the presence of the old friar. Nor did the Magdalena attempt to oppose me. He was a man of peace and charity, and it was not to his taste to cause disturbance by open opposition. His opposition was always clandestine, secret, unperceived. But the friar objected, and declared that he would not accept my proposal. I protested that I would sooner leave the house than afford ground for suspicion that I considered myself superior to an old man, venerable from his age. They were compelled, therefore, to submit to my will. The serenity of Father L —— was somewhat disturbed by my resolution. He now despaired of ever beholding the quarrels and disquietudes, from which his placid soul had anticipated so much delight. The impression of his white teeth was perceptible on his full, rich lips. They bid me adieu, and left me alone with the old father.

I soon discovered that though my new companion was far removed from perfection, he was not badly disposed. He had his petty jealousies, but they were carried to no extravagant height.

He was somewhat stingy, but he lived well, and allowed me to do the same. He was ignorant, but he made no pretensions to learning. In short, though he did not command respect or love, it was easy to live with him in peace. We dwelt together for five years, without ever gratifying the scheming Magdalena with one instance of a quarrel. Even at the end of this period he would not have left me, had not his advanced age demanded rest.

During that five years' interval, and with the old friar for my companion, my inclination for play revived. After confessing my love of play as a sin, a year previously to the commencement of my noviciate, I had never indulged in the vicious propensity. I did not now even know the cards. The good old man, with true paternal condescension, became my teacher. He taught me, of course, from motives of charity; but, be it observed, I always had to stake something, that I might play more attentively. I was always sure to lose, and the father professor (professor of a new species of theology) was equally sure to win; but, of course, only that I might the more quickly learn to win from others. In the space of two months he won from me all the money that I had saved, and all that I received during that time. It is the old story of gambling: the experienced gambler entraps

the young and inexperienced, and enriches himself at his expense. His gambling was a real fortune to the father. He was a friend to good living, and though he spent the whole income of the mission house upon it, he could still collect large sums, which he placed out at interest. All our leisure hours were spent in play, either at home or at the houses of friends, and I became completely inebriated with the passion for it. Perhaps this congeniality of tastes was the bond that united us together so harmoniously. Father F —— went every season to the baths of St. B —— for a fortnight. He paid all his travelling expenses, lived sumptuously, and returned home with his purse well filled; thanks to the opportunity there afforded him for play.

Gamblers are, as a general rule, liberal; but certainly my comrade was far from being so at the period when I made his acquaintance. But, during his younger days, he was said to have been very generous. When he had just won money from me his heart would expand, and he would make me the confidant of the events of his past life. He told me, that while he was in his first mission house, thieves entered and plundered it. Fortunately he had no money there at the time, but the servant had a pair of solid gold bracelets, and a gold chain, twenty-four silk dresses, and a great deal of female toggery besides, all

of which they carried off. He, like a generous master, replaced the stolen goods, to indemnify her for her loss. So here was a proof of his liberality. And he gave me also another. The nephew of his servant became a priest. After celebrating mass for the first time, he seated himself near the altar, and the people crowded round him to kiss his hand. The priests kiss the palm, the rest of the people kiss the back. The good friar, his aunt's master, proved himself, indeed, a good "father" on this occasion; he slipped into his hand a roll of thirty-six golden napoleons. The day before he had bought him a silk sash, such as priests wear, which had cost three napoleons; a gold repeater, the price of which was twelve; and a valuable work, for which he had paid seven. Was it not a libel to accuse him of want of liberality? His short comings, as a monk, were many and great. But I believe he sinned more from ignorance than from malevolence.

I have spoken at some length of this man, in order to demonstrate that none of the friars, or, at most, but few, keep their vows. Neither the simple-hearted nor the acute, neither the learned nor the ignorant, maintained them inviolate. Among a hundred of the Roman Catholic clergy, are there twenty who keep their vows? Are there ten, or even five, who have not once in their

lives infringed them? And how many are there who live in the habitual violation of them?

The few friars engaged in the mission were examples of avarice, intemperance, and ambition. Their characters would have sufficed to throw discredit upon the order, even had they been the exceptions among a thousand instances of purity and rectitude of conduct. But forming the majority, among so very limited a number, they cause the charges to press the heavier against the order.

STORY OF A CONVERT.

I had been several years at the mission, and father F —— had left me to pass his last days in quiet and retirement, when one of my old fellow-students came to see me. He was, like myself, attached to one of the missions in the country. He gave me a long account of his life at the mission. He had incurred, he said, the displeasure of the superiors and of his fellow-friars, and was treated most unjustly by the community; and all because he did his duty, while the others failed to do theirs. He had a very great desire to quit his station and join ours. His tale bore the semblance of truth, and I offered to make known his wish to our own prefect, and promised to recommend him warmly. In the meanwhile he wrote to the prefect, stating

his wishes and assigning the same reasons. The surest means to obtain credence and favour is to speak ill of a rival party, and such was the case here. The prefect, on receiving his request, believing the motives he stated to be real, invited him to his own residence, until an answer should arrive from Rome to the letter which he had already despatched thither. The journey to the hospital of the prefect was somewhat long, and he asked me for money to defray his expenses. I gave him a twenty frank piece, thinking that he was perfectly destitute. When he was gone, however, my servant told me that a short time before he left he bought a large box of tobacco of a pedlar, in paying for which he took out his purse, which she saw was full of gold pieces. I now found that he had cheated me out of my money; but the sum was only small, and I said nothing about it. He remained with the prefect until the answer arrived from Rome. It was in the negative, and he was ordered to repair directly to his convent. It became manifest that he had not left the mission of his own free will, but that he had received orders from Rome to leave, having been accused, and with too much reason, of leading a scandalous life. It afterwards transpired, that before he left his own mission house he sold the furniture, provisions and cattle, and took away money

which he had solicited from the community in advance, besides leaving his administration burdened with debts. For these proceedings he was accountable, not to the community, but to the regular ecclesiastical court. They would not prosecute, however, and he escaped. The friars, as I have before shown, never like lawsuits of that kind.

He went to the convent of the provincial in his own province, where he was hospitably received. After he had stayed there a few days the provincial offered to send him to another convent in an official capacity. He assumed an air of superiority, and assured the provincial, with the most confident tone imaginable, that it was not worth while, for the few days he had still to wait, to go to another place; he expected very soon to be called to Rome on business of importance. He was asked the nature of the business, and after allowing himself to be pressed a little, he said that he expected to be made a bishop. This was too extraordinary a thing to be easily believed; but he continued to affirm it so constantly that it became at last impossible to doubt it. He was not only allowed to remain, but he was treated with great respect. But the order that he pretended to be waiting for did not come, and it was soon apparent that it never would come. His belief that he

should be made a bishop became generally known. An attorney, seeing the sort of man that he was—devoid of firmness of purpose, and inflated with vanity—determined to make game of him. The silly friar gave him, by degrees, all the money he had, in return for which the deceitful lawyer gave him false information, and kept him in suspense. Having extorted all his money from him, he abandoned him, leaving him to put up with the loss and the ridicule he had incurred. He had no wish to bury himself in a convent. A holy life had no charms for him, and he possessed not the skill requisite to lead the ordinary monastic life, which combines the appearance of sanctity with the reality of dissipation. "Act as you please; but avoid open scandal," is the motto of most friars; but he had not cleverness enough to make it his. By some means he procured a passage to Algiers, in a ship that was about to sail. He arrived there safely, and had the audacity to present himself to the Roman Catholic bishop, pretending that he was commissioned to go to the Indies to assist in converting the heathen. He solicited money; but the bishop was not so blind or credulous as to be deceived by him. He refused to believe his mere assertion, and he had no papers to produce. Though he tried hard to reassure the bishop, and invented many plausible excuses for not having

written credentials, he signally failed in his attempts to get money. His schemes proving abortive, he embarked for Gibraltar. There he presented himself to the Protestant bishop, and succeeded in deceiving him completely. The good man gave full credence to his fine story, and supplied him with money and letters of recommendation to Malta. He went thither, and was received in the college established for the reception of priests who are converts to Protestantism. He remained there for some time, and when I arrived at Malta I met with him. But the life he led was still most irregular; his principles were corrupt, and his temper violent and incautious. He was detected in some enormity, but was treated with lenity. A person of some influence sent him to Sicily on a mission of slight importance. He remained there but a very short time, spending the money with which he had been entrusted in illegal pleasures. Of course he effected no good; but on the contrary, did much harm. He returned to Malta in a most miserable condition, with his clothes all tattered, not more than six weeks after he had set out, making a most respectable figure, and well provided with cash.

He obtained letters of recommendation for Tunis, and embarked on board a vessel bound for that place. The letters were most useful to

him. He was believed to be an honest man and a sincere convert, who had renounced the errors of Rome from conviction. A minister of the Presbyterian Church, a Scotchman, who kept a boarding school at Tunis for the children of his countrymen, employed him as teacher. He did not mend his ways, however; but was discovered in the perpetration of gross immorality. The minister indignantly dismissed him. He declared that he was unjustly accused, and maintained his innocence with the utmost vehemence. He made use of all a friar's impudence and tenacity in supporting his assertions, and, with his powerful voice, talked down the poor minister, who was a meek, peaceable man. But notwithstanding this, and that there were no legal proofs against him, the friar could not but feel that his Protestant career was stopped. He accordingly wrote to Rome, confessing his errors, and uttering the most ardent desires to return into the bosom of the true church. He requested that credentials might be sent to him at Marseilles. He asserted to the general that he had deceived the Protestants, in pretending to be a convert, in order to save his life. His wish was granted. At Marseilles he found his papers readmitting him to his former condition in the Catholic church. After his miraculous reconversion, he returned to his convent, where,

having done penance, he was held in high esteem, and looked upon as a striking proof of the error of Protestantism and the truth of Catholicism.

Many priests become Protestants, thinking that the Evangelical Church will shower riches on their heads. But when they perceive that they fare worse after their conversion than whilst they belonged to the fold of the rich Roman pastorate, they return, bewailing their apostacy. Such examples, of course, tend to render doubtful the conversion of those who in sincerity abandon the errors of Rome and embrace the gospel, content to lead a life of hardship and obscurity. Neglected by their more favoured Protestant brethren, they are looked upon as the off-scouring of society. But for the truth Christ laid down His life, and for the truth genuine converts are content to suffer with humility and christian resignation.

KIND ACTION OF THE MAGDALENA.

The Magdalena was possessed of a strong and energetic will, great subtilty of genius, and indefatigable activity; but, unfortunately, all his energies were directed to evil ends, and his influence was exerted for harm over everything by which he was surrounded. He availed himself of his high gifts to produce grief, pain, and

misery. Wherever he appears we invariably find him pursuing a mischievous course, working evil—spontaneously—for its own sake, without any ground for hatred, envy, or vengeance; simply for the pleasure which evil can yield. Nor does his inclination single him out as an object of special notice; but the refined hypocrisy and artifice with which he carries out his plans are indeed rare.

Among the friars of the mission was one whose intellectual capacity was below the average; but he had the discretion to avoid interfering in the affairs of others. He lived for himself, alone, unnoticed by the rest, and equally removed from virtue and vice. He did his duty, with regard to his spiritual cares, without zeal, but with scrupulous exactitude, and his conduct and integrity were unimpeachable. But, alas! the serpent crossed his path. He, in his childish simplicity, was allured by its bright colours, and forgot its poison. With simple credulity, bewitched by the irresistible charm of its eye, in which he flattered himself he read devoted affection, he extended his hand to grasp the showy reptile, was seized by its venomous fangs, and suffered deadly hurt.

The Magdalena had insinuated himself into the good graces of the simple man. He had won his heart by his seducing words, by his soft

manners, and above all, by his ecstatic and fervent manifestations of piety. Father L—— was his prototype, his mentor, his adviser, his all. Why then should the Magdalena desire to ruin a man who entertained for him devoted admiration, respect and love? He had no reason for nourishing hatred or revenge. No misunderstanding had arisen between them. But led by his inclination to commit acts of gratuitous cruelty, his innate love of evil induced him to seek an object on which to expend his malevolence.

A wealthy lady died, a member of one of the most distinguished families in the place. During her life she had been much respected, and was a most influential person. The priest or friar usually goes to the house of mourning, to accompany the body to its resting place. Sometimes when the deceased belongs to the lowest class of people, and the distance is very great, the friends and relations accompany the coffin, and the priest meets them, either on the way or at the church, to perform the funeral service. But in this case the family was rich, and the distance very short. On the day appointed for the ceremony, the simple friar saw the Magdalena, and told him that he was going to officiate at the funeral. "Where," asked father L——, "do you intend to meet the procession?" "At the

house, to be sure," replied the other. "These rich people," said father L ——, "are indeed most unreasonable; they require us to go everywhere, to wear out ourselves for them. They order us about, as if they were our masters. We poor friars are the servants of all. We run about, night and day, to please them. We have to obey the caprices of every troublesome person without daring to refuse. We are not left in peace for a moment by the living, and it is hard indeed that the dead should molest us too. We have other things to do beside running after them, to their very houses, to accompany them to their graves. We have to hear confession, to preach, to visit the sick, who are often unreasonable enough to summon us because their finger aches, and they know we cannot refuse to go. We have to perform divine service, to read prayers, and, at home, in our secret chambers, we must lift our hearts to God, to the holy virgin, and to the saints in paradise. Besides all this we must give ourselves to holy meditations, and contemplate the ineffable mysteries of our holy religion. We have to advise the faithful, to lead back the erring, to instruct the ignorant, to direct and superintend the schools; in short, we have plenty to do without running after the dead. The church is our place, and there we ought to wait for the dead; that is all that duty

requires of us. I certainly should not go to the house to fetch the body." The good friar, who was not overstocked with brains, allowed himself to be completely carried away by the grandiloquent speech of Father L ——, who seemed to employ his eloquence to uphold the dignity of his order, for the honour of which he appeared most tenacious. He believed it to be praiseworthy to oppose secular pretensions, and he was strengthened in his belief by each sentence that fell from the smiling and eloquent lips of the devoutest of all devout friars. He answered, therefore, with an air of indignation, "You are right, father L ——, it is shameful that we should be made the tools of all; that we should be forced to obey every unreasonable summons. For my part, I am determined not to go to the house. Let them accompany their dead themselves." "Ah, good brother," cried father L ——, "you are really a dear soul. You are a real member of the order of the seraphic Saint Francis; you are ready to brave displeasure and persecution in defence of the order." Here the reader will imagine that he advised him to do as he suggested; but no, he chose to be able to say that he had advised him to the contrary. The stone was thrown, but he wished the hand that threw it to remain unseen. He accordingly continued,

"if it were my own case, my dear brother, certainly I should not go; but all the others go, and it would grieve me to see you exposed to anything unpleasant as the result of your refusal. I would therefore advise you, nay, implore you to go; for it would distress my mind, should you be ill-treated in consequence." "No, I will not go," exclaimed the valiant upholder of the honour of the Capuchin order, striking his hand upon the table, as if boldly challenging the adverse party to close combat. "No, I will not go," repeated he, "it shall never be said that father M ——, from fear, has failed to uphold the dignity of his order." "Be persuaded by me. Do go, my dearest soul, for your own sake," said father L——. "No, I shall certainly not!" exclaimed he again, most heroically. The Magdalena hung down his head and sighed deeply. He cast a prolonged look of sympathy and admiration on the magnanimous friar, and said, "Well, be it so, if you are resolved; but I assure you I dare not advise it. If any evil happens to you, remember it is not my fault. Now you must allow me to attend to my sacred duties." Having excited him to the requisite degree of boldness, he feared to prolong the conversation, lest he should expose himself to danger. He dismissed him with a most affectionate salute—the kiss of a traitor. With upturned eyes he invoked

a blessing upon his head, and made the cross, with which he professed to begin the performance of his private devotions. The friar left, determined to have his own way in the matter, and father L —— followed him with a look not unlike that with which, we may suppose, the evil one regarded our mother Eve, when he saw her about to taste the forbidden fruit.

The friar acted up to his word When he received the invitation, he refused to go to the house. He was threatened, but he remained obstinate. On being reprimanded, he became furious, and declared that he would rather be torn to pieces than yield. He carried his point. The procession left the house without him, but the relations of the deceased vowed vengeance. The deeply-offended family raised a commotion, and declared that he should not be allowed to remain in the place. The community held a council, and the indignation of the family was shared by all the assembly. It was decided that the recalcitrant friar should be dismissed from his office instantly. A letter was written to the vice-prefect, couched in the most ardent language, containing an intimation to that effect. The vice-prefect, seeing that the affair was irremediable, consented to withdraw him from the place, and from the mission, as the natural consequence of the first step, for, of course, no other

parish would accept him after this. However the vice-prefect requested, in favour of the obnoxious friar, a week's delay, to arrange his affairs. The request was granted, though somewhat grudgingly; but the friar, indignant at the treatment he had brought upon himself, refused to remain an hour longer. He left the house immediately, and took up his abode under the roof of his devoted friend, the Magdalena. Father L —— received him with open arms, expressing the most heartfelt sympathy. He was naturally inclined to hospitality, and he could but be delighted with the opportunity of exercising it towards so dear a friend. Here the deluded man waited for his writ of dismissal from Rome, which the vice-prefect had requested with all speed. During this period I went one day to see father L ——, and found the friar there. They were in close conversation together, and when I entered, the Magdalena would have put a stop to their discourse, but his companion went on, and seemed glad of my presence. He requested father L —— to write a petition for him to Rome—the Magdalena was an adept with his pen. In this petition, the foolish man demanded from the Sacred Congregation an adequate retribution for his services during the years he had laboured at the mission. As a missionary he had hoped to acquire a degree and

title in the order, with the attendant privileges. Indeed the favours he looked for were no mere trifles. In the first place he expected to have bestowed upon him the privileges of the ex-provincials; to obtain the title of "most reverend"; to be allowed to choose a convent where he might reside, and also choose his family; which means to select the friars according to his own will. Besides all this, he solicited a privilege not even conferred on the ex-provincials, that of money at their own disposal. The Magdalena said, "It is but just, my dear, you are quite right; you have done a great deal for the mission. You have been zealous and most exemplary. You have done more than many others who make greater claims. You have been actuated alone by real humility; you are well entitled to ask all this and even more. I write the petition most willingly, and feel fully persuaded that your requests will be complied with."

The petition was written in beautiful characters and in a flourishing and elegant style. The friar signed it himself, and the good father L — repeated that the result could not be doubtful— that it was certain. In his serene look and malicious eye there lurked an indefinable something of satire and commiseration. When the friar had quitted the room, I said to father L ——, "What can you be thinking about to be so foolish

as to send such a petition? The demands are exorbitant and perfectly preposterous; indeed they look as if the writer were insane." "Oh! what a dear man you are," replied he. "Do you really think that I would be guilty of such folly? I saw you, you rogue, (he lifted his forefinger in a threatening way,) whilst we were speaking. I saw the malicious smile that played upon your countenance. But what could I do? I did not wish to contradict the poor man; the pleasure of hope is a great comfort to him. But do not think that I intend to send such a foolish petition to Rome." Nor had he such an intention: he tore up the paper. The writ of dismissal arrived, the friar departed, and I know no more about him. To me it seems that the man who could commit such an action from pure malice must be an incarnate fiend.

TWO JOURNEYS.

I had passed several years at the mission without having visited the capital of the country. Being desirous of seeing it, I proposed to another friar that we should make the journey together, and he accepted the offer. We were tolerably well furnished with money, and not wishing to tire ourselves, we procured a good horse and set off. We took good care to make ourselves comfortable on the road; for even I, though I did

not wish to consider myself a real friar, was one after all. At the first place at which we stopped, we took dinner. Our appetites being excited by the exercise and the sharp mountain air, we felt disposed to do full justice to the repast, and we enjoyed a good meal. The innkeeper was well known to the friars, and much liked by them. On his part, he felt a great respect for the fraternity, and was very glad to see us.

The friars live upon charity, and generally the people, at whose houses they present themselves, provide them with all things needful, free of charge. If they wish to pay, or rather, if they manifest an intention to pay, the debt is cancelled without payment. But in this case, our good dinner cost us seven francs each, which was very dear for a place of that kind. When we had refreshed ourselves we continued our journey. By the aid of our horse we travelled quickly over the ground. Towards evening we arrived at a small village inhabited by Protestants only, and the inn was consequently kept by a Protestant. We felt a pang at our heart at having arrived at such a place. It seemed to us almost as if we had reached the infernal regions and were surrounded by demons. Such are the ideas which, in the Roman Catholic system of education, are infused into the minds of the young; and these prejudices are still more rooted in those

brought up in convents. To look even at a Protestant seems to them no less than a crime. In speaking to one they fear contamination. To touch the hand or the clothes of a heretic seems to them like coming into actual contact with Satan. They are taught to believe that Protestants are fierce, hard-hearted, vindictive, atheistical, and steeped in vice and pollution of every kind. I appeared to see before my eyes the picture of the martyrdom of Saint Fedele di Sigmaringa, the first martyr who shed his blood in opposing the Reform of Luther. The painter, perhaps by order of the fanatic monks, totally heedless of historic truth, has represented the holy man with humble mien, his eyes raised to heaven, expressing celestial resignation, and almost ecstatic delight, while he is undergoing torment for the truth's sake. He is surrounded by executioners, who, with fierce eyes and countenances, indicating the ferocity of assassins, and with their powerful limbs bared, are in the act of flagellating the holy man, tearing his limbs, and smiting him on the face with their large and dirty hands; just as the tormentors of our Saviour himself are represented. Such are the pictures of Protestants presented to the Roman Catholic world, and by the friars, who have never seen Protestants and therefore do not know them, they are sincerely believed to be

faithful delineations. I had never spoken to one of them in my life, and, as the consequence of my ignorance and early imbibed prejudices, I believed them to be exactly such ruffians as the torments of St. Fedele exhibited them.—Now we seemed compelled by necessity to stay a night at a Protestant inn; but we did not decide upon so formidable a step without mature deliberation. We reasoned that it would be worse to wander about the whole night in a hostile place, as we considered it, where our garb might expose us to persecution and ill-treatment, and, as the lesser evil, we determined to enter the inn.

We were greatly surprised to be received by a modest woman, with a very sweet and gentle countenance, and a particularly pleasing, though reserved, manner. She seemed to offer a real type of domestic virtue, good housewifery, and maternal care. We were conducted to a very decent parlour, and had scarcely seated ourselves when the landlord, her husband, made his appearance. He was a man of most agreeable aspect and affable manners, and had an honest, pleasing air. After cordially greeting us, he asked our pleasure. "We wish to sleep here to-night," said I. "You are most welcome, fathers," he replied: "my house is honoured by your presence." He served to us a good

supper, which we much enjoyed; for having been accustomed to the convent suppers, we were not averse to indulging in a substantial meal in the evening. The wines were choice and the dishes well prepared. Our host conducted us to our bed-room, which was a double-bedded one; for, in the house of Protestants, we did not think it safe to separate. When we were left alone, we expressed our surprise that Protestants could be so civil and obliging, and that they should receive us with so much readiness and so many manifestations of good-will.

The following morning we enjoyed an excellent breakfast, and were quite surprised to observe the simple and patriarchal way in which this family lived. When we were ready to pursue our journey, we called the host and asked for our bill. With some embarrassment he replied civilly that we could please ourselves and give what we liked; but that he should prefer it if we did not pay him at all. We objected, and insisted upon his accepting payment. "Well, if you will have it so, fathers," said he, "my charge is two francs." "What, two francs!" we exclaimed, not trusting our ears: "we must owe you a great deal more than that, and we wish to know exactly how much." "Well, then, if I must speak plainly, I do not wish to take more. I know that your institution lays it down

as a law that you must live by alms; and it would seem to me that I was violating the doctrine of christian charity—that I failed to follow Christ's example—if I exacted from you that which an innkeeper of your own persuasion would refuse to accept in a similar case." Here our thoughts reverted to the seven francs each which we had paid for our dinner; but, of course, we said nothing. "So, my good fathers, you must allow me to act towards you as others do; and since you insist on paying me, I will take two francs to satisfy you." The value of his argument I felt in its full force: it quite came home to my mind. It seemed purely evangelical, and I felt secretly ashamed to think differently of him than my heart would prompt. I could but feel sympathy towards one who interpreted the gospel thus. A sudden horror came over me at the thought that these people, so kind, so upright, who believed in Christ and in the redemption wrought by Him, should be, according to our notions, condemned irrevocably to eternal flames. This doctrine I ceased to hold from that moment. However hard I tried to force myself to believe it, my heart refused to give credence to it. This was the first ray of divine grace that penetrated my mind, to drive away the darkness and make the truth known to me! We took a most cordial farewell of our

landlord, and pursued our way. I kept the good man and his interesting family in my thoughts, and for a long time his image filled my mind. I felt a strong tendency to sympathy and love for a religion which rendered men so charitable. We both expressed admiration of the man's conduct; but I did not venture to impart to my companion the ideas that dawned in my mind with regard to our own prejudices. I myself trembled at them, as if such thoughts were impious and heretical. Though I endeavoured to discard them, they haunted me for a considerable time. By degrees they were lulled and slumbered in my heart, but were never quite extinguished. The germ of divine grace had taken root in my soul, and was destined eventually to bear fruit.

Should these papers fall into the hands of that truly christian man, who, according to the inscrutable plans of the Almighty, was permitted to be the secondary cause of my conversion, he will feel it to be one of the highest privileges of his life, that his practical charity should have had so important an effect upon my mind. Theological disquisitions may go far to convince the understanding, but are powerless over the heart. The practice of the christian virtues, the greatest of which is charity, is more potent in winning souls to Christ than all the preaching of the

most learned divines. The kind innkeeper little thought of the good he was effecting when he treated us so courteously. From my present abode, amidst trials and afflictions, I tender him fervent thanks and benedictions, as having been the instrument, in the hands of the Lord, to lead me in the paths of peace. From that time the saying of divine wisdom was often present to my mind—"there is a way that seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Prov. xvi, 25.) Doubts often arose in my mind if the path I was pursuing was the right one; and I prayed to God most fervently to illuminate my understanding.

Not very long after this journey, which had awakened a train of ideas so new to me, I felt a desire to see my native country and my friends once more. As a missionary, I was at liberty to go if I thought proper, and I availed myself of my freedom. I was kindly received by my friends, and treated by all with respect and affection. I was bound to take up my abode in the convent of the place; but I passed most of the time in delightful association with those who were dear to me. My heart bounded with joy when I beheld again the familiar scenes of my childhood. I looked at everything with delight. Every object had a language that spoke to my heart. The mountains, with whose irregularities

of contour I was so familiar, and of which I knew so well every intricate winding pass; the peaks, the valleys, all greeted me as well known friends, all spoke in familiar accents. The fields, the brooks, the groves, the dormant pool, the spring gushing forth from the rocks; the quiet hiding places of rural solitude, and the open spaces presenting picturesque views, but more especially nature's secret recesses; all, all addressed themselves to my heart. A tree, a stone, a cot, a path across the fields, breathed eloquence; and many sweet reminiscences of childhood's days sprung up within me as I gazed. But, alas! everything that brought before my mind the sad recollection of my poor mother, spoke in mournful and depressing accents. But I am only relating my own story, as it is connected with that of the friars. It is not my province to dwell upon the romantic and tender. The materials I have in hand, and which are drawing to a conclusion, are far from arousing gentle and loving remembrances—they are the history of the friars!

One day I took a walk along the sea shore, accompanied by a gentleman, one of the most respectable inhabitants of the place, who manifested much courtesy towards me. He was in easy circumstances, and enjoyed the reputation of being a man of learning and unblemished

integrity. His conversation exhibited great strength and vigour of understanding, and he spoke, with a profundity of knowledge that was surprising, of the errors of the Roman church. I replied as well as I could; but prejudice is powerless against the force of sound argument. I was vanquished though not convinced. Grace was, as yet, but struggling to gain an entrance into my heart. An internal voice, urging me to yield to the truth, spoke gently within me, but I drove it away, as a temptation not to be yielded to.

It was the eve of the festival of the Immaculate Conception, which, though not fully admitted as a dogma of the Romish church, is still inculcated by Rome. The Capuchins are ordered to defend it against all attacks, and, under every circumstance, to treat it as a doctrine of the church. It is a pernicious sentiment, which deifies the virgin, and enfeebles the holy mystery of the incarnation and redemption. My companion spoke of the festival of the following day, and of the grave errors resulting from it. I disputed the point with all the ardour of a fanatic. My adversary showed an amount of equanimity and composure, only manifested by one who is sure of the soundness of his argument, and has no fear of defeat. The fanatical and threatening attitude assumed by the controversialists of

Rome; the rage, the imprecations, the maledictions, the infamous libels, the atrocious accusations of individuals, show too plainly that they feel the weakness of their cause and the nullity of their arguments. It is a vulgar adage, but withal a true one, "He who cries the loudest has the least reason on his side." I allowed myself to be carried away by agitation and indignation, and I am now ready to own, frankly, that it was from fear of his arguments; I dreaded to be vanquished by them. Seeing my perturbation, he closed the argument by saying, "Why so much zeal among you monks to maintain this error, for it is quite a new doctrine? The holy fathers themselves were opposed to it." "How!" said I, sharply, "a new doctrine? it is as old as the church itself." Thus I had been taught in the convent by the professors. "Tell me," said my companion calmly, "which of the fathers wrote with the most zeal respecting the sanctity of the virgin Mary." "You know well enough, sir," said I, assuming the importance of a professor; "it was Saint Bernard, who spoke with such gentle eloquence about the virgin that the appellation of 'the Mellifluous' was bestowed upon him." "Well," replied he, earnestly, "your mellifluous St. Bernard has spoken most decidedly against the immaculate conception. You have, of course, the works of

St. Bernard in the convent library. Find the letter to the chapter at Lyons, and you will see that it contains very strong language against the canons, who were the first to introduce the festival in question; you will observe, too, with what force of argument he proves the falsity and error of the belief."

I felt perfectly convinced that he was altogether mistaken. I turned my steps homeward, and hastened to the library to find the works of St. Bernard. I quickly discovered the letter in dispute. It was very long, and written with great spirit. By an abundance of reasons, deduced from the word of God, it showed plainly that the innovators were in error, and that to hold the doctrine was heretical. I remained quite confounded for a considerable time, with the book open before me. It was one volume of the works of St. Bernard acknowledged by the church, and approved by papal authority before being published. I took the book to the father guardian, and showed him the letter which had so much surprised me. He read for awhile, then threw the book on the ground, and declared furiously that it was an apocryphal letter. I objected to the possibility of its being an apocryphal letter, seeing that it was in the edition of the works approved by the Holy See; but he maintained his proposition with

so much energy that I dared no longer to insist, lest I should be suspected of heretical doctrines. I could not help reflecting upon the absurdity of the guardian's idea. Had all the learned men of Europe met together to prove the letter apocryphal, they would never have succeeded in the face of Rome's decision. "Even supposing it to be apocryphal," thought I, "that does not in the least weaken the arguments adduced. Had the most confirmed atheist in the world written the epistle, the arguments themselves must still have been worthy of consideration." A decree, by authority, is the most powerful appeal of the church of Romē. It is a principle which establishes the infallibility of the Pope, and which leads the people into the most deplorable folly and superstition. Whatever issues from the Pope is blindly believed. The Pope corrupts and alters the sense of the holy Bible. God, he pretends, speaks by him. God corrects His holy word by his instrumentality. He improves it! as if God had erred and had repented of his error.*

* The suppression of the second commandment of the decalogue, in order to authorize image worship, and the division of the tenth, to restore the original number, would alone suffice to prove my assertion. Numerous evidences exist of the fraud unhesitatingly employed by Rome to veil the unhallowed devices which she uses to deceive and blind her votaries.

Upon my next interview with my acquaintance I confessed my surprise to find that he was right, and told him what had taken place between the guardian and myself. He replied, in a very pointed manner, "I see that you possess good sense and rectitude: employ both in seeking after the truth." His words struck me forcibly, and I advanced another step in the path of righteousness and justice. By degrees I was being conducted to the understanding of the truth.

DISORDERS AT THE MISSION, AND MY CONSEQUENT RETURN TO MY OWN PROVINCE.

I left my native country, and returned to the mission, inspired with the spirit of investigation. The grossness of superstition and prejudice was in a measure overcome; and I was now just beginning, by the grace of God, to cast off the old man and put on the new.

The events hitherto narrated, as taking place at the mission, have concerned individuals; but in taking the sum of them, a pretty correct idea of the general character of the monks may be obtained. I am now about to lay before the reader an occurrence which will prove the demoralization, generally, of these missionary friars, whose office is, professedly, to preach the faith.

The ecclesiastical authorities, feeling intense shame at the scandal excited by the impurity of life and conduct of the friars in the various missions, were bent upon taking steps to restrain their evil actions. The friars, however, unhesitatingly and unblushingly declared their determination to maintain their vicious course of life. Blinded by passion, they threw off every restraint, braved public opinion, made common cause, and succeeded in opposing all innovations.

An apostolic visitor—who holds an office higher than that of the prefect—appealed to Rome, that the women servants might be dismissed from the missions. He drew a horrible picture of the corruption of the friars, in consequence of the prevailing custom. He said that instead of reforming and improving the habits of the people, the friars furnished examples of vice. Laymen would, of course, commit sins with greater effrontery, when they found themselves encouraged by the example of the monks. Moreover, the evil habits of the friars had a tendency to produce scepticism and heresy, as furnishing the impious disseminators of anti-christian doctrines with the strongest arguments against the doctrines of Rome. It must be understood, by-the-bye, that many of those whom the good father pleased to designate as

disseminators of heretical doctrines, were christian men, who advocated reform.

He endeavoured to show that the missions were far from being conducted with judgment and zeal. He proved that, instead of devoting themselves willingly to work in the vineyard of the Lord, speaking words of truth and virtue, and both doctrinally and practically exemplifying christian life, the friars were swayed by the caprice and perverted by the ungodliness of their female companions.

This was all true; the accusation was just. Rome listened to the complaint, and reform was judged necessary. A strict law was passed with regard to one mission which stood foremost on the list. The fathers of that mission were obliged to dismiss their servants, and accept, in their stead, lay-brethren, sent them from the convents.

It was not alone pure zeal for the honour of the church which induced the apostolic visitor to exert himself in the matter: ambition had a large share in his endeavours. He well knew how much sensation his proceedings would excite, and also, that in case of success, honour would accrue to him as the result. His plans succeeded, and he was nominated bishop *in partibus*, or bishop in heathen lands, and his residence abroad was commanded. He com-

menced the voyage to his new scene of labour, but he never accomplished it. A storm arose, the ship was wrecked, and he perished in the deep. It was the will of divine providence that he should thus suddenly terminate his course. Imprecations without number had been levelled against him, and the intelligence of his death produced a lively feeling of satisfaction in many hearts.

It is natural for those who are unhappy to envy the happy; for those who suffer hardships to hate those who are exempt. The tribulation experienced by the friars of the one mission, in being compelled to part with their handmaids, aroused the fiercest envy in their breasts against those who still retained them. "Is it right," asked they, "that the pleasures, of which we are deprived, should be enjoyed by others?"—such is moral socialism—"that a benefit denied to us, by a severe law, should be conceded to others in the same condition as ourselves?" Their complaints were not without effect. It was decided at Rome that the laws relating to the one mission should be enforced with regard to the rest, as precisely the same arguments applied to each. Great fear fell upon the friars of our mission, when they perceived the danger which menaced them. Above all others the Magdalena distinguished himself by his ardonr

in the cause. He ran from one to another, inviting them to remain firm in maintaining their rights. "Oh, the wickedness of men!" cried he, in doleful accents, raising his soft, innocent eyes, guileless and pure as his heart: "The few domestic comforts, which we enjoy in the Lord, are envied us, in our holy retirement. The attentions of dear sisters, who lead holy lives, are denied to us, because of the evil tongues of men, and because of the misconduct of a few, who, it is true, have erred. The monks are pure and holy in general; and if some be found that differ, among the apostles there was a Judas. Must we all suffer, because a few have done wrong?" Thus he poured forth his complaints, with a gentle rapidity of utterance, like a nightingale, that, agitated by unusual emotion, utters its sweet notes with unwonted ardour. "The servants have been here for two centuries, and now, if they were dismissed, instead of putting an end to scandal, it would be the means of producing it. The friars would be open to slanderous remarks; the world would say that the servants had been sent away on account of disorders which, in reality, do not exist." He proved to demonstration that, both in an economical and a moral point of view, the mission houses would be much worse managed if lay brethren were substituted.

Scandal would, indeed, then have free play. "The lay brethren are rude in manners, and profligate in habits. They are uneducated, and they would be running about the country like vagabonds; disorders would follow their footsteps, and the friars would certainly be brought into discredit by their means. We observe decorum," said he, winding up his speech. "We say mass every day, which guards us from sin. These men have no sacerdotal character to maintain: they never say mass, and will infallibly fall into all sorts of mischief." These, and other potent arguments, were advanced by the most worthy and holy father L——. His observations made a deep impression on the minds of the friars, for he touched a tender chord, and they determined, unanimously, to resist the arbitrary mandate. But it was all in vain. The Vatican thundered: the friars were compelled to bow their heads in humility, and obey. The servants were sent away by authority, and the hated lay brethren took their places.

They, poor fellows, received the treatment which, under the circumstances, they might expect. They were not allowed enough to eat, they never were addressed in terms of civility, and were, on every possible occasion, ill-treated in every respect. Complaints were perpetually made of them to the superiors for imaginary

offences, to which the superiors were only too ready to lend a willing ear, for they were also victims to the new regulation. The poor men were rendered quite desperate by the treatment they met with. They felt too plainly that they were looked upon with an evil eye, and they could not endure the treatment to which they were subject. Some left the house in the dead of the night, running as for their lives, not knowing where to turn, and only anxious to escape from the friars. Others went to the prefect to lament their misfortunes, nor could, by any means, be persuaded to return to the abodes they had quitted; until, after the lapse of a short period, the hospitals were entirely deserted by the lay-brethren, and the servants were of necessity recalled.

I was perfectly disgusted by these proceedings, and determined to stay no longer at the mission. I requested permission to withdraw; but the answer I received from the Propaganda was, that they had resolved to retain in that mission men of known probity only, and that they could not allow me to abandon my charge. I therefore remained some time longer, until circumstances affecting me personally induced me again to solicit my dismissal.

But before proceeding to these I would relate an occurrence which took place under my own

eyes, of the truth of which, otherwise, I might have been sceptical. Numerous cases of the same kind are continually recurring, exhibiting the fanaticism, the superstition, and the errors inculcated by the priests and friars. In the Roman church holy exercises are held, from time to time, in the different dioceses. Two preachers officiate and assemble the people in the church, which is darkened for the occasion. Preaching, meditation, and exhortation are held two or three times in the day. Penitence is enjoined upon all, and the people are encouraged to yield themselves up to spiritual abstraction. Men and women confess and bewail their sins. For these few days they are saints; but as soon as this period has passed they are again, as before, sinners. The preachers are usually selected from one of the orders, denominated, white, black, and grey. At the last occurrence of the kind, during my stay at the mission, a grey friar officiated. He was about sixty: his hair was grey, his beard was long, and his aspect altogether was strikingly severe. His was one of the most powerful voices that ever fulminated threatenings from a pulpit. On the closing day of the services, it is usual for the friar to bestow his benediction upon the people. On this occasion, instead of offering spiritual consolation to his hearers, the preacher represented

God as the terrible avenger of the sins of mankind, the destroyer of His creatures; and sought to infuse the utmost possible terror into the minds of his audience. The moment for the benediction arrived. He finished his appalling objurgation with these words, uttered in tremendous tones:—"In conclusion, my hearers, do you choose the benediction or the malediction?" Overcome by horror and affright all maintain a breathless silence, while he, in still more solemn tones, repeats his demand. At the second interrogation sighs and groans are heard, not from the women alone, but from the heart-stricken men too. Again, for the third time, in tones the deepest and most sepulchral, he exclaimed solemnly, "do you choose the blessing or the curse?" A general burst of tears was the reply, followed by a loud cry—a phrenzied cry—from the terror-stricken people: "The blessing, father! the blessing!" and the blessing was given.

At the conclusion of the service, three persons left the church insane, two women and a man; nor did they ever recover their reason.

A few days after Epiphany, I was requested by the vice-prefect to call upon him, as he wished to confer with me on matters of importance. I was at a loss to imagine the reason of the summons; but, as a matter of course, I

obeyed. He was not a severe nor harsh man. He himself needed indulgence: his conduct was so far from being correct that he rarely ventured to reprove slight failings in others. He had, however, sent for me to reproach and admonish me. The fault of which he accused me was that of having taken my gun and gone out shooting on the day of Epiphany, during the time of church service; equally unmindful of the solemnity of the day and hour, of my sacred character, and the obligations imposed upon me by my office. It was in vain that I protested my innocence. The manner in which he reproved me was certainly soft and gentle enough; but the accusation was not the less formidable on that account. Going out shooting was not, in the act itself, any great crime. All the monks and priests were in the habit of indulging in the diversion, except, perhaps, the tender-hearted Magdalena, upon whose sensitive nerves the death of an innocent bird, or even the report of a gun, would produce too great a shock. But the ground of the accusation was the day on which the occurrence took place. The tale was wholly without foundation, and I protested to the vice-prefect that it was a gross calumny. I did not know who was the originator of the accusation; but I immediately suspected who it might be. Though the vice-prefect was far

from treating me harshly, it was apparent enough that he gave no heed to my assertions of innocence. While we were discussing the matter—he admonishing me in the blandest tones, I endeavouring to prove my innocence—he was summoned to the sacristy, to attend a woman upon some spiritual business, and I remained alone. As I walked up and down the room awaiting his return, I passed to and fro before a book-shelf. Upon it lay his official papers, the greater part of which were endorsed, to indicate the subjects of which they treated. Casting my eye accidentally over some of the papers which were lying there, not yet arranged, I saw upon one an endorsement, "Respecting Father G—— going out shooting on the day of Epiphany." I recognized the writing of the address. It was a delicate, fine hand, the finest and most delicate that ever issued from the large sleeve of the rough tunic of a friar. It could be the writing of none other than the Magdalena. The mystery was explained. No doubt, one evening, probably that of Epiphany, the Magdalena, passing in review the events of the day, regretted, like Titus, that they presented not one good action to his recollection; only Titus called *good* good; whereas, the Magdalena called *evil* good. Feeling ill at ease with himself, he would determine to redeem the past by at once per-

forming an action which should render the day, hitherto unfruitful, richly productive. His mind, *diabolus sufflat*, received inspiration, and arrived at once at a method of satisfying his desires. He penned the accusation against poor Father G——, who, perhaps, at the very moment, was enjoying his supper, unconscious of the avalanche about to overwhelm him. All this is mere hypothesis; but the substantial, material paper, which lay before my eyes, presented nothing hypothetical. It was a speaking monument of malice, and the how and the wherefore of its fabrication was a matter of minor importance.

At this moment, Father G—— was far from being the meek man which he has hitherto appeared in the pages of this narrative. Fury filled my breast, and I yielded to its suggestions. My hand obeyed the impulse of my will. Without the slightest upbraiding of conscience, and without the interval of a second between the thought and the deed, I possessed myself of the letter. I accomplished the theft, and siezed the paper, with a rapidity equal to that with which the Spartans removed a dainty dish from table, without exciting the notice of a single guest, when all were well satisfied with good cheer. With equal rapidity did this paper travel from its resting-place into the sleeve of Father G——. I returned home, after bidding good

day to the vice-prefect, who little suspected what had occurred. I read the paper, the contents of which were fully explained by the few words outside. The letter was a doleful narration, with the main features of which I had already been made acquainted by the vice-prefect. The writer said that he should have admonished me himself, instead of thus making the fact known to one of my superiors, but that his courage failed him, from the fear that his sincerity might meet with an unkind and unchristian repulse. It, therefore, appeared to him wiser, though it was sorely opposed to his inclination, to inform his superiors of the occurrence. He felt, too, that his duty, as the delegate of the prefect, demanded this sacrifice of feeling on his part. Such were the contents of the holy letter penned by the zealous apostle of truth; or rather, by the base fabricator of falsehoods and calumnies; to which he contrived to give an appearance of dignified veracity and simplicity. I cannot describe my indignation on thus perusing this tissue of fables. I ran to seek my old companion, Father F——, who was perfectly willing to bear witness to my innocence of the charge. He drew up a declaration attesting that I had performed mass and preached on that day, and that I returned home immediately afterwards, and remained at home for the rest of the day. In addition to this attestation I wrote to

the Propaganda, to state the infamous treatment that I had received at the mission, and added some particulars respecting the Magdalena and the superiors little to their credit, but which were incapable of refutation. My accusation had been preceded by that of several others. The authorities were completely wearied out with complaints of the tyranny and fraud of the prefect, the vice-prefect, and the delegate of the prefect; and, shortly after, a decree of dismissal was sent to all three, and so finished their unjust reign.

MY NEW DESTINATION AND EVENTS THAT BRING ABOUT MY CONVERSION.

In a second letter to the Propaganda I had again ardently requested my dismissal. It was accorded, and I returned to my convent, leaving the mission altogether, right glad to quit associates in whom I had found so much deceit and double dealing. Leaning upon my staff, I set forth, leaving behind me the liberty I had enjoyed and the many comforts of a private residence, to return to the gloomy walls of a convent, to the ascetic life of a cloister, with the wearisome and monotonous routine of claustral devotions. I did not think of the sacrifice I was making in yielding up my liberty, for at that season my heart was

closed to every enjoyment of life. I left the familiar mountains and retired valleys, I renounced the gentle murmuring of the stream and plashing of the fountain, I gave up the consolations of friendship, and separated myself from the simple inhabitants of the place without a tear. The recollection of the many pleasures I had enjoyed was obscured by the disgust I felt at the ill-regulated conduct of my fellow friars.

Upon returning to the convent of P ——, in my own province, after an absence of seven years, I found the state of the convents by no means improved. Litigation, discontent, ambition, envy, were the order of the day, as before my departure. Shortly after my arrival, I was requested by the provincial—"the Beauty"—to explain the scriptures in the cathedral of S ——. I refused, because my convictions at that time placed me in a difficult position. If I explained them according to the doctrines of Rome, I should sin against my conscience. Had I explained them according to the light which God had shed upon my mind, I should have risked incurring the displeasure of the Holy Inquisition, and then my fate could easily be foreseen. My mind was in a most miserable state from this time. I had a glimmering of the truth, but it was still enveloped in the mist of prejudice. Mine was not

yet that clear evident faith from on high, which breathes peace into the soul of man. Like the thirsty hart, I sought the water brooks which I had not yet found. I heard their dulcet murmurs afar off. I espied the flowers and herbage which grew beside them; but I could not yet possess myself of their refreshing waters, and my thirst was augmented by impatience. I had recourse to prayer, but it was far from yielding perfect peace to my soul, because formulated according to educational superstitions. I no longer invoked the saints, but I persevered in praying to the virgin. This superstition was so deeply rooted in my mind, that it was the very last error of the Romish church of which I divested myself. So enticing, to the sensitive mind, is the doctrine that wily Rome inculcates, of the intercession of the blessed virgin, the mother of God!

I felt a strong desire to quit convent life entirely, and to retire to some free country, where I should be at liberty to study and follow the truth. My faith, as far as intellect was concerned, was perfect, and I have not words to express the gratitude I feel to Almighty God, that in abandoning the superstitions of Rome, I was preserved from falling into the equally pernicious error of scepticism: which is an evil of constant occurrence. But God never abandons those who seek Him in

sincerity and truth, and He was my helper. I was at a loss to imagine the way to effect my purpose of quitting the convent. Besides the difficulties of escape, in my inexperience, I believed that there was no spot upon earth which Rome could not penetrate, to repossess herself of those who abandoned her, and prove to them that she could be, according to circumstances, the tender mother that she styles herself, or the cruel executioner. It was my impression, that not only in every corner of Europe, but in the most secret recesses of the desert, wherever I might find a hiding place, Rome would seek me out, and avenge herself for my desertion. Hence the idea of surreptitious flight was out of the question. After remaining for some time in a terrible state of uncertainty, I asked for and obtained from Rome permission to return to my native province. During my sojourn there, I heard mention made of some convents which were being rebuilt in France. I was advised and invited to go to them, and looking upon it as a special dispensation of Providence in my favour, I immediately consented. Consequently, after having remained six months in my own province, I again bid adieu to Italy, and set out for France, without having formed any definite projects, but trusting to divine aid for the accomplishment of my purpose. I had

now a more favourable opportunity than ever of seeing convent life in all its horrors. In the course of a few weeks I was in four different convents. All the friars whom I there met were Italians, and the greater part of them known to me. Most of them, if not all, had solicited permission to come to France from motives of ambition. They promised themselves, in these newly-revived institutions, the attainment of those honours and that influence which had hitherto been denied them, either as the consequence of their own demerits, or the superior skill for intrigue of their companions. Here, therefore, I found more ambition, envy, animosity, and discord, than ever; and, above all, more hypocrisy. Naturally, then, my resolution was strengthened, and I quite resolved to take some steps to free myself altogether from my detested associates. While at the mission I had never dared to make any enquiries relative to the means of accomplishing my desire. In France I began to get more correct notions of things relating to Rome. I had not yet laid aside all timidity, but I was gradually gaining courage. I made the acquaintance of the Swiss consul, and explained my position to him. He gave me most satisfactory information, so that the path of duty seemed to open before my eyes. But in proportion as the time approached for me

to act decisively, my mind became more and more agitated, and my uncertainty increased; so that, although I had fully determined to escape, I could not decide upon actually taking the step, and continued to reside in the convent. Indeed, my difficulties were great. When I entered upon my present career, I renounced all my worldly possessions, and could now claim no right to them. If I abandoned my present course of life, I should be completely bereft of the means of subsistence. I could not be sure of meeting with sympathy, or of obtaining employment; my only prospect seemed to be to beg my bread. Such considerations were, of course, the consequence of a lack of faith. I had seen the errors of Rome, and had embraced the truth, to a certain extent; but I was not yet the subject of that life-giving faith which enables the recipient to contemplate poverty, for Christ's sake, with composure. But at length God had pity upon me, and accepted my fervent prayers, presented at His mercy seat, in the name of Christ Jesus. A circumstance occurred which sufficed to disperse all my doubts and hesitations as to leaving the convent, and I never again allowed poverty, or obstacles of any kind, to impede me in the course of rectitude. I was brought to acknowledge the truth of the scripture, "Better is little with the fear of the Lord, than

great treasure and trouble therewith." (Prov. xv, 16.) But I had not yet attained to that perfect peace which I have since been permitted to experience. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon thee." (Is. xxvi, 3.)

After I had passed some weeks in the convent, at Lyons, the father guardian pressed me strongly to request permission to hear confessions. I refused most decidedly. He insisted, saying, after the many years' experience I had had, I should do much good to the convent by the influence I should gain over the penitents. He added, that besides the internal satisfaction I should derive from doing so much good I should secure his gratitude. I was quite averse to the idea, because I had determined to take the very first opportunity to quit the place, and, moreover, I felt the utmost repugnance to the ceremony itself, for my conscience now disapproved of auricular confession. However the guardian continued to press the point so earnestly, that I found I could not refuse without awakening suspicion in his mind. "Very well, then, father," I said, "I will go to-morrow morning to request the permission of the Archbishop." His demonstrations of gratitude on obtaining my consent were most lively.

The following morning, about ten o'clock, I

went to the palace of the Archbishop,—who was also Cardinal—accompanied by a lay brother. The groom of the chambers, upon seeing me, exclaimed impatiently, "the friars must have some business of great importance in hand to come so often to trouble his Eminence. The father guardian of the convent has just left and now here is another friar." I apologized for the intrusion, saying that it was not on my own account, but on convent business, that I desired to see his Eminence the Archbishop. He announced me, and I entered. The reception I met with was of the most unexpected kind. "What do you want, father?" asked the Archbishop abruptly. "I have called upon your Eminence to request permission to hear confession in the convent." "Have you any merits of your own to confess? I am quite surprised that you should come here with such a request." "I do not know that I have any demerits to confess, your excellency, but it is not my own wish. The fathers"—"The fathers! what do you mean? The guardian has been here this morning to inform me of your intention of coming to ask my permission, and of your unfitness for the office you would assume. You had much better return to your own province; that is the decision we came to this morning." At this intimation from his Eminence, I was, of course, no little

startled. I took my resolution promptly and irrevocably, and exclaimed aloud, "the measure is full to overflowing, and I shall now hesitate no longer." Thus saying, I rushed from his presence, not only without the usual formalities of prostration before a Cardinal, but without even wishing him good morning. In a single glance I beheld all the occurrences of the past twenty years. All the enormities of conventual life, of which I had been the witness, through that long space of time, rushed with impetuosity across my recollection. I beheld the friars in their true aspect, clad in the most revolting garb. Mentally they crowded before me, offering a mass of perversity, irreligion, scepticism, and depravity. All presented itself in the extent of its corruption, in that one moment. To throw the hateful tunic from my shoulders, and cast it indignantly far, far away from me; to invest myself with the rags rejected by the poorest and the most abject, and to beg my bread so attired, appeared to me the height of felicity, in comparison to remaining among this hated set of hooded sinners, who purchased praises and popularity by their hypocrisy.

I re-entered the convent, and retired to my cell, to mature my plans. There I thought long and seriously, and committed my re-

flections to writing. Without saying a word, I went out alone, and hurried to the office of a paper called, "Le Censeur," (The Censor,) a journal ardently opposed to the hierarchy. I requested to see the proprietor, who asked, with a cold air of civility, what he could do for me. "Could you obtain for me the insertion of an article in your journal?" "Yes, I could certainly obtain the insertion, were it an article adapted to our columns," said he, in a tone implying that it was very unlikely that it should be adapted to them. I showed him the article. On reading it, the severe expression of his face softened down. His intelligent eye twinkled with an expression half grave, half comic. A most satirical smile overspread his features. The article was a faithful relation of what had just taken place, with comments upon monkish perfidy. The proprietor seemed thoroughly to enjoy it. His taste for humbling monkish pretensions was apparently gratified to the utmost degree by the paper before him. He replied, in the most courteous manner, "I shall be most happy to insert so able an article, and would not miss the opportunity for any sum; and I shall be glad, with your consent, to add some further comments." I assured him that I should be much obliged to him, as I had no fear of his adding anything to weaken its effect. It was

decided that the article should appear the next day. I thanked him, and returned to the convent quite delighted. I was about to accuse the friars of crimes which they could not deny, in a manner the most distasteful to them. I am well aware, now, that such desire of vengeance was far from being commendable; but I was too excited at the time to reflect upon it. The morning dawned tranquilly; the friars, little dreaming of the tempest about to burst over their heads, and totally unconscious that I, who was quietly sharing their morning repast, was to be the prime agent in the commotion. The adverse paper was read aloud every day to the assembled brethren, and the method of rebutting its attacks discussed. As usual, on this morning, about nine o'clock, all were listening in the refectory. I was not present; but it may be imagined how great was the consternation when the reading of my article commenced. The most violent emotion agitated the breasts of the fraternity. With heart-sickening suspense they listened to the end. At the conclusion each uttered a cry of indignation. Neither the reader nor I being present, we must abandon the hope of realizing the scene in all its richness; but I could form an approximate idea of the commotion from the noise that reached me in my cell. Presently the tumult waxed louder

and louder. It resounded through the whole convent, and seemed to ascend the stairs, step by step, until, at length, it reached my room. Several friars entered the cell—I need hardly add, omitting the formality of asking admission. The first upon whom my eyes fell was the guardian. He presented a truly piteous appearance. His face wore an air of desperate grief. With tears in his eyes and lamentable groans, "Father G——," he exclaimed, "what have you done?" He threw himself on his knees before me and sobbed aloud, hiding his head in the folds of my tunic. "Father G——, Father G——," again he cried, "what have you been doing? But there is forgiveness yet. You may still find pity and pardon. You may again be received and caressed like the prodigal son returned. Our love will be greater than ever if you repent. Oh Father G——, have pity upon yourself. Pity! pity!" cried he in tones of beseeching anguish. "You must go to Rome. We will give you money and letters. There you may obtain pardon and become dearer to us than you were before you erred." I listened to his exclamations altogether unmoved, except by indignation. The passage occurred to my mind, "he that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him." His perfidy was evident, from the proposition that I should

go to Rome. His only wish, I plainly saw, was to get me safe into the hands of the Inquisition. Unable to restrain my anger, I rose from my seat, leaving the abject wretch grovelling at my feet. "Out upon you, hypocrites!" exclaimed I. "Away with you out of my sight: I will have nothing more to do with you or your infamous set." They all, one after the other, vacated the cell. Some cast upon me looks of hate and rage. Some departed silently, with their eyes cast down. Others, with hypocritical suavity of tone and feigned pity in their looks, uttered a prayer that God would change my heart. One among them, I fancied, bestowed upon me a look of sympathy. The guardian rose, dried his tears, and his countenance changed as by magic. I remained alone in my cell and completed the composition of a second article for "Le Censeur." To avoid the publication of this article had been the object of the humiliation of the guardian. Shortly after, the vicar paid me a visit. His heart was filled with rage and malice, which he attempted to hide by the most disgusting cajolery. He offered me money and a passport for my journey to Rome. The friars, he said, were christians; they pardoned their enemies, and prayed that the sinner might be led to see the error of his ways. They desired to return good for evil; and, therefore, they offered me money

and a passport. He trusted their act of evangelical charity might have a salutary impression on my heart, and be the means of turning me to repentance. I told him I should avail myself of his kindness, if the money and passport were offered me unconditionally; but I wished to know if they would avail me in case of my turning my steps northward. "Oh no, not in that case," answered he dryly. "Your charity and that of the friars," answered I, "limits itself to provoking me with the means to convey me safe to prison. *Timeo danaos et dona ferentes.* Your money I do not need: your passport I would rather not accept," and so I dismissed him.

At length the important moment arrived to quit the convent for ever. I possessed rather a large collection of books and papers, and a considerable number of sermons and panegyrics; but I left everything behind. I felt as if anything I took away would weigh me down like a load of sin. With nothing but the dress I wore, and 200 francs, which I possessed in virtue of a written papal permission, authorizing me to possess money, I took my departure. Before setting out I read the consoling exhortations in Matt. vi, 25—34: "Take no thought for your life," &c., and committed myself to the care of Providence.

And now that I was at length free, I ex-

perienced sensations of the most mixed kind. Sorrow and pleasure, sadness and joy, and even affection, all blended, as I looked back to the scenes I was leaving, and forward to the uncertainty of the future. After twenty years, passed for the most part in disappointment and disquietude, yet still offering some pleasant passages for retrospection, it was impossible to quit the convent unmoved, and I shed a tear—a tear of sorrow, not of joy. Even the prisoner leaves his cell with a blended feeling of joy and sadness. Man is a mysterious being! The captive is happy in thinking of the still distant moment when he will escape from his hated dungeon; but when the moment arrives he feels reluctant to quit the walls which have so long afforded him their rude shelter. Just such was my case. How could I rejoice in forsaking my old familiar path, when I was uncertain if I could find a better? I knew not yet what course to pursue. I saw errors in the track I was leaving; but I was not secure of beholding unalloyed truth in advance. My faith was yet weak and choked with earthly cares. I was still clad with the old man too completely to put on the whole armour of faith. I had consolation, but my peace was not yet perfect; for I had not yet cast all my care upon God; but was still looking for aid from man.

I obtained from a friend two letters of recom-

mendation to Geneva, and to that place I bent my steps. One of them was addressed to a person engaged in commerce, who, on my arrival, I found had failed; but it served to introduce me to another person, by whom I was hospitably entertained for some days. One day, some visitors being present, the conversation turned upon the subject of personal conviction. I expressed myself freely upon the state of my mind, and concluded by asking them if they could direct me to a religious person to whom I might look for counsel. The gentleman of the house asked me, "why would you trouble yourself to look for a religious person? Here everybody leads a quiet life. They eat, drink, sleep, and do good if they can: they are honest, and trouble themselves but little about Christ and religion." I felt so deeply shocked and disappointed at these words, that I decided to leave the place immediately. I did not deliver my second letter of introduction, fearing that the person to whom it was addressed was among the number of the incredulous. I formed his acquaintance later, and had the pleasure of finding in him a sincere christian. Thus I had the opportunity of disproving, at least in part, the assertion of my Genovese friend. I now began to doubt if unmixed truth existed in the world, and to think that the errors of Rome were not so great

as I had imagined them to be. I found myself in so terrible a state of perplexity and uncertainty, that I seriously entertained the idea of returning to Rome, to confess my error, and be received again as one of her members. Deluded simpleton that I was! Instead of being counselled and assisted, I should have been rejected and thrown into prison to die. Had I abjured my religion, under circumstances to excite attention in the world, and afterwards returned to Rome, I should have been received with open arms, to parade the triumph of the true faith in regaining an erring son. But my apostacy was not publicly known, and had I gone to Rome, my defection would have been punished without mercy. I was not, however, calm enough to reason then, and with the idea of returning I actually went as far as Locarno. Here my disquietude increased, and I remained a week in the most terrible condition of mind. Total discouragement took possession of me. I knew not what to do, or where to find help. My heart was completely abandoned to despair, and my only desire was to die. But a helping arm was nigh, which suffered me not to be crushed under the load which oppressed me. In that solemn hour the Spirit inspired me with fresh confidence to seek Him who is ever ready to listen when men seek Him in sincerity and truth. At this juncture

of the most soul-sickening oppression which human nature could possibly endure, God bestowed upon me His quickening grace. Oh! then I could appreciate the blessed invitation, "come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Then I could cry with confidence, "Abba, Father." I enjoyed the full liberty of prayer for the first time. I prayed the prayer of faith, and was made strong in the strength of the Almighty. From that moment I was another man. Faith pervaded my heart, and joy shone into my mind. Flinging aside all cares and disquietude, and all rancour against my former associates, I set out for Basle. I reached Bellinzona; but there I was subjected to a trial, which, however, I bore with christian fortitude. I had taken my place by the Diligence for Lucerne; but missed the conveyance and lost my money. I set forth on foot, carrying with me a secular dress, which I had procured, and walked as far as the foot of St. Gothard. Here I took a place to Lucerne. On entering the inn in that town, I met with the driver of a car, who kindly offered to take me to Basle. He was a Protestant, and did not know that I was an unfraternized friar; but believed me to be in heart, as I still was in dress, a brother of the monkish fraternity. We were two days performing the journey. I took the oppor-

tunity, while we were travelling, to go alone into a wood and exchange my monk's frock for my new garments. I felt as if I were relieved from a weight of iniquity by throwing off that garb, under the protection of which I had seen committed so many enormities. I exclaimed sadly, as I cast it aside, "would that all were disposed thus to abandon you, and exchange for you that blessed hope which God has been pleased, of His great goodness, to impart to me." I returned to the driver so completely metamorphosed that he did not recognize me. "I am ready to go on as soon as you please," said I. "What, what?" said he, completely bewildered, looking round for the monk whose voice he heard, but could not see. "You can go on now," repeated I. "What! what! what!" said he, as if in a dream, and unable to articulate. At length he stammered out, "what does this mean? Is it you?" "Certainly," returned I, laughing, "it is I, myself." "But are you not ——?" "I was a friar," said I, interrupting him; "but I am one no longer;" and here I briefly related to him my story. Good as the kind man had been to me before, he was doubly so now. When we parted, he positively refused to accept any remuneration. I could not bid him good bye without a feeling of sadness and regret. Though he was in the humble position of a poor driver,

he had manifested noble sentiments and a warm heart. The lowest in rank may possess true nobility of soul, and the most exalted in station may be, in reality, the meanest hearted of mankind.

Basle being situated on the confines of France, I believed French would be spoken there; but I found a dialect of the German in use, with which I had no acquaintance. I was at first much embarrassed, but at length I found a person who knew a little of French, and he acted as my interpreter. After dinner I walked out to examine the city, and shortly found myself at the entrance of a beautiful square. Here a sharp current of air blew upon me, and I seemed to be entering an ice-house. I glanced at my clothing in affright. For a moment I felt as if I were without any dress, and I experienced a sensation of shame, perhaps not unlike that of our first parents after they had sinned. My new dress was adapted to summer wear, and, though it was the month of May, the season was cold. Naturally then, I experienced a great contrast between it and my heavy tunic, before I became accustomed to my new attire. I espied a seat in the front of a church, and, as a relief to my embarrassment, gladly approached it, and sat down. I was joined in a few moments by an old French-

man of kind and respectable appearance. In answer to my enquiries, he informed me that the church before me, as well as all the rest in Basle, (except on the other side of the Rhine,) was a Protestant one—that it had two pastors, both of whom lived close at hand. At my request he accompanied me to the house of one. He knocked at the door, which was opened by the minister's wife. Glancing at me from head to foot she enquired my business. My sensation of being undressed increased considerably under her searching look, and I doubt not that I appeared one of the most uncouth and timid of mortals that ever emerged from a convent. My embarrassment was so great that I was on the point of saying "Ave Maria," and crossing my arms in monkish fashion; but happily I forbore, and merely asked if I could see the minister. My request was denied, with great want of courtesy, much to the indignation of my companion. Under the circumstances, such treatment was strange. The admission of unknown guests is of constant occurrence on the continent, and particularly in the houses of ministers in Switzerland. The formality of an introduction is quite unnecessary, more especially if the stranger have papers to corroborate his statements: and I had papers with me. We now turned towards the house of the other min-

ister, *M. De La Roche.* He came forward and invited me to enter, and inquired, in the kindest manner, how he could serve me. I related to him my case, and he spoke to me encouragingly, resolved many of my doubts, and offered me assistance and protection. The following day he introduced me to the secretary of an evangelical Society, *M. Spittler,* who was very good to me. He undertook to provide for me, pending the arrival of *M. Jacquet* who would accompany me to a religious institution in France, of which he was the director and founder. In a few days he arrived, and by him I was taken to the house of *Mme. Riggenbak*, by whom, as well as by her two sons, I was treated with the utmost kindness. The christian sympathy shown to me by these individuals will ever remain a subject of delightful recollection, and I most gladly embrace this opportunity of publicly tendering them my heartfelt gratitude and thanks.

Here ends the story of the monk, and commences that of the man. Though not exempt from the trials to which all are exposed in passing through life, the poor friar is now blessed in the enjoyment of conjugal felicity, and four children claim his paternal affections. At present they show no symptoms of that credulity which made their father the victim of the Capuchin

monk. That they may ever be kept from the errors of Rome, and be privileged to labour in the cause of truth, is his sincere prayer. His most ardent desires and indefatigable efforts are directed towards the conversion of his countrymen, and it would be a great satisfaction to him to know that the story of his life had been the means of convincing even one Roman Catholic of the prejudices of his religion. Humbly desiring that the book may be made available to the spread of the light of the gospel, father G— bids adieu to the reader, and leaves the conclusions to be drawn from his tale to the pen of the author.

CONCLUSION.

In the course of our own painful and varied career, we have had the opportunity of studying man in every condition and in every stage of his life. Under all circumstances, however, and in every locality, his corruptions have manifested themselves to us exactly as they are represented in the sacred pages. Though once a pure and sinless being, man has now sunk to pollution and degradation.

Among the woods and mountains we confidently looked to find approximate perfection. Retired from the whirl of society in general, we

fancied, with erroneous conceit, that striking traces of primitive innocence must meet our search. But there we found, as elsewhere, marked signs of deterioration. Ambition, blood-thirsty rage, impurity, rapacity and vengeance met us at every turn. The few exceptions arose, less from goodness of heart (the heart of man may be more or less vicious, but is never good) than from the blessed influence of life-giving faith.

We have taken up our abode in the plains and fields irradiated by the sweet smiles of nature, our minds filled with the glowing visions of poets, who have sung, in illusory strains, the praises of rustic innocence. There, too, we have seen undoubted signs of corruption, and have recognized in man the same character—a vessel of wrath—though in exceptional cases our hearts have been gladdened by the assurance of his justification effected through faith.

We have studied man in all his grades in the populous city, where the formalities demanded by social exigencies so frequently assume the appearance of virtue, but are in reality only its phantasm. Upon the removal of the mask, beneath the artificial forms of polished manners and elegant habits, corruption, abomination, and vice spring to light.

We have associated, both from sacerdotal

obligations and from individual position, with the great and the lowly, with the learned and the ignorant, with the artizan and the rich proprietor. We have observed humanity in all its conditions and phases; in rural life and in civic garb, amid the noise of war, and in the abode of ostentatious piety. Everywhere signs of mental and moral prevarication have been apparent.

But God is merciful. He pities human weakness, and pardons man. He washes him pure and clean from every stain in the blood of Christ, provided that he has faith; on condition alone that he confides in Him, not in himself, not in his own merits, and founds no pretensions upon his own holiness.

Now if such is the state of man—and such it is—no wonder he listens to the voice which reaches his ear, saying, "I will show you the way to be holy. Do you not wish to be a saint? Listen to me, and I will teach you how to perform meritorious works. Withdrawn from sinful men, no longer allured by their evil example, but leading a life of pure and innocent retirement, you shall accumulate a vast mass of merits, all your own, all springing from your own works. You shall be assisted *also* by the grace of God, and you shall be holy." Who can call him a prophet, who utters words so

foolish, without committing grievous sin? He is a false prophet who would persuade man that he may become holy in his own strength, by his own works. Man holy! The thought is folly, blasphemy! God alone is holy. The angels are pure, but not holy. He who is holy cannot sin, but the angels have sinned, and man is always and ever sinning.

He who listens to the flattering voice and follows it onwards, in the vain hope of becoming holy, will be far less holy than others, because of his very pretensions to holiness. Obeying the dictates of the voice, in the delirium of excitement, he imposes upon himself obligations which God never laid upon man. He has respect to man's weakness; and man, in pronouncing vows, which, far from sanctioning, God disapproves, tempts the wrath of God by his presumption and self-confidence. Is it not an act of folly and dishonour towards God thus to assume obligations so far beyond His requirements? God's rule is benign, gracious and merciful, if men have faith in Him, and trust to the merits of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who shed His blood for our redemption. Those who trust in themselves nullify the doctrine of faith in Christ and His sacrifice.

And what are the effects of this error? We

have observed them in our scenes from the life of the Capuchins—the order most respected and held in the highest repute in the Catholic world; and who will call these men holy? And who will say they are better than other men, because they have assumed the solemn obligation, before God, to become holy, to make themselves saints? Folly! Impossibility!

That which has been said of the Capuchins may be repeated of the other monastic orders, which are further removed from perfection,—may be predicated of the Roman Catholic clergy in general,—may be affirmed of the system of the Romish church, which, while pretending to hold the doctrine of the redemption, presents to view an awful amount of presumption and impiety. In the church of Rome—setting aside all its errors of dogma—man pronounces judgment on his fellow-man, arrogating to himself a power which is alone the prerogative of God. Man deifies himself upon an altar of his own erection. Man professes to be infallible. The pope is infallible! Yes, indeed! History proves his infallibility! He inculcates a doctrine altogether opposed to the doctrine of God, as propounded in the sacred book. Thus does he erect altar against altar.

Our object, in bringing the matter before the public, was not to inveigh against individuals,

any further than was requisite to show the errors of the system. If we have spoken of men at all, it has only been in reference to the institutions of Catholicism. We have written dispassionately, incited alone by the love of truth, and urged by a strong desire, which struggled imperiously within us, to make known to men truths which we felt they ought to know. Feeling this strong necessity to communicate these facts to the world, woe to us had the fear of human wrath, by whomsoever, or in what manner soever manifested, induced us to remain silent. We feel our own unworthiness, and acknowledge it openly. We are unworthy; but, by the mouth of the unworthy, God is sometimes pleased to declare the truth. With the fullest consciousness of our own nothingness, and confessing ourselves sinners equally with, and perhaps more than others; yet believing that God, in His infinite counsel, has chosen us as an instrument in His hands to open the eyes of the blind and the deluded, we are prepared to encounter, with firmness, every manifestation of rage and hate. Already we hear the howling of the winds: the roar of the tempest strikes our ear, and the thunders of rage are followed by the lightnings of wrath: but we stand firm, unmoved by the threatening tempest. A cloud hangs suspended over our head, ready to launch forth the flaming meteor

of excommunication; but we tremble not, nor give way before any attack, however fierce or protracted. The Capuchin has narrated to us his story and that of the convents in the simplicity of unvarnished truth. We have given the colouring, but have ever maintained the truth inviolate. Our tints have not been the suggestions of fancy; but have been selected in accordance with our own sad and adventurous experience, which has abundantly proved to us that in man dwells sin only, and that alone in the faith of Christ and His merits can justification be found.

Perhaps the serious and sincere may be inclined to object that our narrative has sometimes taken a playful turn—that a somewhat satirical vein may seem to pervade it. We answer, that if such is the case, it occurs principally in speaking of institutions, rather than of individuals, proving the latter to be the victims of the former. With the exception of three characters, however, it appears to us that the most scrupulous can find no ground for disapproval. These three, in the reality of their characters, seemed to offer an exemplification of unscrupulous ambition, of ferocious tyranny, and refined hypocrisy. We have taken them, then, as types presenting the most salient traits in the character of the Roman clergy, whether priests

or friars. In conclusion, we would observe, that amid apparent playfulness, sparkling forth here and there in our narrative, an under-current of sadness may be remarked. We protest that satire is not in our nature, that it is not innate in us. Upon a reconsideration of our remarks it will be seen that they are the result of mature reflection upon human weakness, exciting in our heart a sentiment of profound sadness, which has exhaled itself in melancholy smiles, manifesting the sadness of the soul more forcibly than tears or complainings. Ours is the sorrowful smile of one who has learned to weep over his own miseries and those of others, trained in the hard school of adversity.

Perhaps we have erred in the narrative, and failed in our colouring; but we have not sinned intentionally. Though man may not regard this, by God, in His infinite goodness, it will be taken into account. To His judgment we commit our work.

Should it be thought that this Work would be beneficial to the evangelical cause in Italy, if published in Italian, those who are kindly disposed to favour the publication

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